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BOOKS BY
ROBERT P. TRISTRAM COFFIN

CHRISTCHURCH
DEW AND BRONZE
BOOK OF
CROWNS AND COTTAGES
GOLDEN FALCON
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An Attic Room

BY

ROBERT P. TRISTRAM COFFIN



ILLUSTRATIONS BY
THE AUTHOR

DOUBLEDAY, DORAN & COMPANY, INC.
GARDEN CITY, NEW YORK
1929



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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES AT
THE COUNTRY LIFE PRESS
GARDEN CITY, N. Y.

FIRST EDITION

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TO
HENRY GODDARD LEACH
30755

*A scholar who is also a thinker
an editor who is also a lover of human
nature, master in the art of life
and a good friend, the author
dedicates these essays on
life as he has found
it jovial and
beautiful*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Acknowledgment is made to the following periodicals for the permission to reprint essays in this volume:

To the *FORUM* for SAINT-POL IN THE SUN, THE BOOK OF TENANTS, DEVON THE DELECTABLE

To the *NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW* for DISTRICT THIRTEEN, FROM WHITE-HEAD TO LE HAVRE, GILT HEELS AND CAPTAINS' BOOTS

To the *VIRGINIA QUARTERLY REVIEW* for CAPTAIN PYE, CODFISH CHOWDER AND SUN

To the *YALE REVIEW* for WHOM POETS HAVE NEGLECTED.

Acknowledgment is also due to the *FORUM* for the permission to include some of the illustrations for the essays.

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FIRST THINGS



First Things

First things first.

For rainy days it is good to have a litany of shining names to say over to yourself. I have mine. It runs like this: *a cockcrow, a mist of dandelions, a thrush in the deep woods, moving pines, a song that reaches before and after, and water high up through the trees.* These are the words which always send out a ripple in my mind, circles on circles until the world seems like the nest of crystal boxes, concentric and shining, that it ought to be. For these are the first memories I have of all that moves and sings and shines in this wonder that has turned out to be life. And the things I remember as first are the things I shall want to have with me last in the valley of the evening.

A cock that crew. . . . Somewhere, out of the dark which had been for æons came the matin of the bird that

calls up the day. Darkness lifted from me for that holy night and for all the nights to come. A protoplasm turned into a child who could go about in the halls of his mind, lay hold on his thoughts when he needed them, and know himself for himself on all the darkest and the highest stairs. There had been only gropings before. There had been a house that was too high and narrow, a room full of fear with a precipice of steps going into a room lower down; there had been the antlered head of a stag just bursting with distended nostrils through the wall. But now all the half-things and the unformed things would tyrannize over me no more. I would be sure that I could stay in the high house even when the others were all gone; I would know that the room below the precipice would always be there, when I climbed down towards it, and I would never think that the stag's head had a body behind the wall again. A tall and friendly stranger had come up beside me with straight, clear eyes. I would never cry out again when things new and strange brushed my skin. I would even go to Sabbath School with that horror of angora fur about my wrists and chin and be tearless and brave. And for all that I had the cock to praise.

A field of dandelions. . . . Sometime after the cock crew, I sat at an open window and saw the world for the first time. I had been down there; but I had not seen

it really until now. It was yellow with dandelions, and a mist that you could see was coming up out of it like steam. It was all alive. You could hear things moving in a mysterious way. Suddenly the dandelions trembled ever so slightly and bent, and somebody whom no one ever sees but everyone knows about when he talks and sings at the same time had gone past that way perhaps. Somebody who makes you think of church bells behind hills and who will always be at hand. In the dark and in the shine. Hereafter you would feel at times as if you were standing on a tower so high that you could see the earth turn and men rush about and yet have silence and peace up there with you, because the person no one ever sees was beside you till the end. And I have the dandelions to thank for that.

A thrush singing in the woods. . . . It was the first bird I had ever really heard sing. It was the last marvel in a long chain of marvels. The first violets, like pieces of the sky, the first anemones, like drops of snow left over into April. I had had my first trip out past all houses, out of sight of all windows and doors. I was too tired to take in anything more. Then, when the shadow of the earth was climbing up the eastern sky, the bird sang among the distant trees. Three broken little songs rising higher and higher until they faltered and failed. All at once I knew what it was to be alone and

among things so lovely that they made your heart ache. For you could never tell how beautiful they were even though you were to live a thousand years and have all the best words on the end of your tongue. My father thought it was weariness that made me burst suddenly into tears. But it was the thrush I have to thank for that.

Pines that moved. . . . Again I was riding with my father into the country. I grew tired of watching the sand flow back into the paths our wheels made. I looked up from the turning wheels, and I saw with great surprise that everything around me but the sky was turning and turning. The pines by the side of the road rushed backwards, but the pines far off from the road were stealthily coming along with us as we rode. On both sides the trees were marching in great circles. The near trees ran back, the far trees ran forward. The farthest travelled ahead as quickly as we. I saw that we should never be clear of them. I felt like singing to know that those tall wonders could move, after all. I believe I did sing, too. Those things you believed to be one sort of thing would probably surprise you some day and turn out matters to wonder about and quite different, if you looked at them long enough and crept up on them unawares. They would turn out to be companions too close to

talk with people about. I did not tell my father what I had seen. He only knew that I sat up suddenly very straight for some reason he would never understand and smiled to myself. It is the moving pines I have to praise for that.

A song that reaches into all the past and all the future.
. . . I cannot remember just where it was I heard the song. But it was somewhere in a dim place like a church. There was a new kind of music to me, not voices but bigger things and sounds that went overhead like wings. It might have been an organ. I could not tell where the sound was coming from, and that made it more mysterious. It seemed to be all through the air and high up especially. It shook you through and through, as if you were sitting under the arch of a bridge and many feet were passing over the bridge and things greater than feet. It shook you until it became a part of you, a part of your heartbeat and the singing in your ears when you hold your hands over them. And somehow at last you seemed to know that the song you were hearing had never had a beginning but had been there forever and would go on forever after you were out of this place and out of all the places you would ever visit on earth. So steady and solemn it would never be done. Deep and everlasting and no break or stop. Feet marching on and

on and on. Years afterwards I heard words written two thousand years ago that sound like that song:

*Corde natus ex parentis
Ante mundi exordium,
A et Ω cognominatus,
Ipse fons et clausula
Omnium, quae sunt, fuerunt,
Quaeque post futura sunt.*

And music, of an organ perhaps, opened such a door for me.

The sight of water through the trees. . . . Once again I rode with my father. We went downhill, and the trees were thick ahead. But I began to see patches of light between them. Patches of luminous mystery and islands of light. I asked my father what they were. He told me it was the sea. I wondered about his answer until I suddenly saw a hill that reached above all the trees I had been gazing through to the very sky everywhere and everywhere straight as a bowstring. Over everything in the world rose that tremendous mountain, and boats with sails were climbing up it out of sight. Islands clung to the sides of it, but the mountain that was all blue and calm minded them not at all; it went up and was still. It would always be behind things when you thought about them and looked at them long enough. It would

be there when I and the trees and my father were far away. Great birds would be trying to go over it, but it would never allow them. For on the other side was something too holy for any bird or ship or island to know about. Something that people would never soil with their hands. Something to snow all the years with wings. And it was the sea above the trees I can praise for that.

First things are bright things. *A cockcrow, a mist of dandelions, a thrush in the deep woods, moving pines, a song that reaches before and after, and water high up through the trees. . . .* If one can only remember to say them over in the evening!

DISTRICT THIRTEEN



District Thirteen

The plains of Troy may lie hidden under a very dull name. Hissarlik and District Thirteen. I suppose there must be some tens of thousands of buildings as like the country schoolhouse where I first met the Muses as peas in a pod. Like the rows of sculptured children for Elizabethan tombs, they were turned out all alike. Red, square, two windows to a side, one room with an airtight stove so placed that no single radiation of heat should be wasted in the smoke as it traversed the length of the room through the pipe to the back, a single door, a dark corridor across the front with cordwood and pegs for hats and coats. The first principles of architecture and the last—lintel, walls, and a roof as innocent of flourishes as New England chariey. Yet I and others, in this schoolhouse and its companion pieces, found it a place like a temple, a house of awe; and years afterwards we

knew that beauty had sat there knee to our knees and had bent over a desk so carven and notched that the pen stumbled in the epigraphy of forgotten grandsires.

Our forbears, who made it their hearty life work to raise boys by the baker's dozen so that there should be hands enough to fence in all their acres with stonewalls, ran against the Gospel teaching and the Sermon on the Mount. For they scattered the seedlings of their loins on hard places among the stones. They cut off a scant acre of ledges and junipers and said in their saving hearts, "There's the place for the schoolhouse." Their potatoes had to have dark soil to grow in; but their sons and their daughters could do with rocks that the crows used to crack their cockleshells and clams upon. And the miracle was that the boys with the skim-milk eyes and the girls with the thin and wistful hair sent their roots down into these waste places and brought forth yields a thousand-fold. This crop turned out the bumper one. New England's chief export became, not ice, not hay, not potatoes, but men. Most of the younger states of the Union can testify to the fact that the New England seed is the seed that loves rock best. It thrives on adversity. It is a good thing to have granite bred into the backbone.

The granite around my own schoolhouse was as fine a place for glory as any walls of Troy. It heaved itself aloft into galleons of the Caribbees with a scrub pine or

two for masts to rig and man. It was convenient to crack boiled eggs on in the luncheon hour. The taste of boiled eggs to this day makes me taste granite. I should like a physicist to explain to me why eggs that had awaited one through the long forenoon of Spencerian flourishes and incipient fractions should get to resemble nuggets of granite when one came to open and eat. We climbed our ledges with Montcalm in white silk breeches and all the grenadiers of great France drawn up to expect us. It didn't matter to us that Montcalm had freckles so thick that you couldn't put a pin down and knickers that were stayed at the seat with twine. I doubt if Wolfe's heart ever came so up into his throat as ours when we scaled the cliff to win another continent for the race of the blue-eyed.

The ledge taught us, too, to keep our feet in wrestling. It was no easy mat for the falling. I have seen my yellow hair—worn in hateful ringlets which my mother was loath to see go—scattered about the fissures of rock like the armour of the Achæans when Hector was in flower. But my adversary learned to his regret, after the hand-holds on my head had given way at their roots, that ears are a more stable grip than hair. His ears were longer than mine, and they served well as handles to a head that saw stars before I was through. Homer can sing of fighters who longed to eat out the hearts of foemen

and Cooper can cry of Redskins who bit the dust; but no man of letters ancient or new has ever put into words the venom we had rankling in our muscles and the hate that glowed like pine coals in us when we stood up big-toes to big-toes with boys whom we liked and walked home with and fought over again some battle resurrected from the pages of books. Pacifists must begin younger than they have done in the past. War is in us from the cradle. And there are worse things than war. The feudal system, Chivalric love, Thermopylæ, and the race called Marathon have come out of battle and the taste of blood. It is not all widows weeping!

Nor did we subsist entirely upon the rocks that humped their spines through the world around our schoolhouse. We held all the country for miles around in fee. It was mostly run-out farms with houses that had grown back into nature, through whose paneless sashes the blue-brown swallows wheeled. The swallows reared their young on mantels which had the Classic grace of Adam and the spaciousness of Anne's day three thousand miles from England. Lilacs bivouacked by green cellars where houses had gone the way of last year's leaves. Alder hedges ran through fields full of Queen Anne's lace and black-eyed Susans. In the tangles of birch and maple stonewalls everywhere. The arbutus, the flower that brings back Christ among the lingering northern snows,

trailed the land with miles of fragrance. Lady-slippers and bird-on-the-wing. Nature had taken this old cradle of men back; she rocked her shy children here. In the heat of our games we came upon fawns whose wide round eyes mooned upon us, and bucks with many points on their antlers marched across our meadows with their heads held high and their does behind them.

Our games were cut to the country. They led us afar through swamps and over and under walls. "Wolf" was the king of games. Two hunters bore brooms for guns, and the rest of us scattered into all manner of woods before them. When a wolf was touched by the broom, he must stand dead until a comrade freed him with another touch. I have stood thus with many a long sunny afternoon washing around me and the knowledge that history, which I loved best of all books, was on the dock back at the schoolhouse. Partridges grew bold and eyed me, and squirrels worked themselves into a lather of curiosity above me; but I kept my honour bright and moved not. It took a deal of time to school new teachers in the tenets of honour. Often they used the rod upon boys who were patterns of loyalty and sportsmen extraordinary. "Hare and hounds" is a fine game I know, but it lacks the charm of our "wolf." We travelled with our hearts in our temples, each for himself and all of us to the twenty-four corners of the sky. It took a Daniel Boone in knee pants

to run us all down separately. I am glad to say that there was no coddling of the weaker sex among us. Our sisters were Amazons that outfooted the best that warmed breeches with flying legs. They climbed as tall trees and barked their shins on walls as high. And our best teachers, even though they went in skirts, ran their way home to our hearts and carried cards of safety pins for binding up our wounds and theirs.

Some of our games we made up for ourselves out of whole cloth. "Tolly over the schoolhouse" was such a one. We chose sides and distributed ourselves along the two sides of the building. Back and forth between us over the ridgepole went an erratic ball that one had to catch before it hit the ground. Such ballistic madness as lay in that ball's flight is hard to conceive. You were on your bruised knees, and the ball was elsewhere. Parents miles away could hear the school when the sphere put in an appearance on the rim of the Andes. The best players knew how to score surely with a volley so high that the ball did not touch the roof on its downward swoop until it was a foot from the eaves. As you can well imagine, the most important player in this game was the umpire. He stood at the schoolhouse's end so that he could see both sides and give his decisions. He needed to be a cross between a Solomon and a John L. Sullivan, for quite the hardest bruises often came his way when his judgment

slipped. The teachers, once they were trained, were the wisest choice here.

Then there was "plunder," another game of sides in which each tried to capture a handkerchief behind the line of combat without being seized and "frozen" until freed by his own men. This was, next to "wolf," the hardest on our mothers. One sometimes got the handkerchief at the loss of his corduroy breeches. All the ninety and nine vintages of "tag" we had and "blind man's buff," in which we once brought down the whole length of the overhead stovepipe, for rainy days. Another favourite was again an invention of our own. Some of us had seen in town a game of baseball played without catching on any too well to the basic principles. Baseball was not a game for widely separated farmers' children with uncertain fields to disport themselves upon. So our sport of bat-and-ball was a queer combination of cricket and baseball, with mayhem thrown in as a spice. We had a pitcher and bases; but the bat was a paddle, and the striker who tipped the ball even slightly was greeted with the cry—"Tick, two more!" Any sort of pitch grounded or overhead was legal tender provided one could reach it by three steps to either side or a moderately high jump into the air. An expert at leaping and plunging could stay at bat for the afternoon. If he ever did hit the ball any distance whatever, backwards or forwards, he had

to run to a base and back and take his chances of mortality by acting as a target for the lucky boy who retrieved the ball and did his level best to "bore" him in transit. A "boring" meant an out, and often it was more literal than that; water might have to be applied to a spouting nose. The crippled cared for, each man in the field moved up one place. There was only one batter at a time. I was an expert at the game, in all modesty I say it; for my father made me a bat that was light as goose down and wide enough to comb everything out of the earth or air. It was my pride until the dismal day when Albert, the school featherbrain, got hold of it to assault an innocent toad that we had put into his jaws when he was silly enough to open his mouth and close his eyes to get something—which he so sorely needed—to make him wise.

Games, though, were not the making of our school. The scholars were that. I do not believe there has ever been brought together under one roof more boys with the Devil in them all bigger than a woodchuck, as our parents would say. Albert comes first easily. In intellect he was "small potatoes and few in a hill." That New England adage hits the nail exactly. But Albert was the prince of our school. Shakespeare knew him. He called him now Falstaff, now Touchstone, now Feste. Shakespeare knew that clownishness is one of the necessary

things that make the world wag on its merry way between rather dubious and forbidding stars. Fools may be cruel jests of nature; but life, with its hawks and boys, has a splendour in its cruelty. And Albert had a royal good time with his light head. He was proud of his distinction of being the one who would be forced to try the skim ice of the roadside pool first. He would rather pluck out his heart than take a dare. So he immersed himself up to the elbows in the evil morass of a barnyard when we dared him to trust himself upon the crust of chaff that coated it. No windows that the teacher could open that afternoon could purge away the memory of his folly. He was such a one as could make even a Monday morning rosy. He it was who must ride to the top of the flagpole in a bottomless basket; and it took the visiting school superintendent, whom I met years after man to man in the dewy *Odyssey*, to shin up, Jovian beard and all, and unlash the rope we had secured on high and let our school clown down.

Indoors everybody egged Albert on till the daily patience of the teacher was broken and the command rang out—"Albert, pass into the corridor!" The rest was rawhide. The darkness of the antechamber was a fit usher for retribution. Albert would clench his fists, but he got only welted knuckles for his pains. Once, though, he turned the tables on us. Alone in the hall he gorged

himself upon all the sweeter tidbits in our lunch-boxes there, and sated ran off home. At whipping times he could command great gushes of tears. It was a physical charm he had along with an ability to make his ears move independently and in unison like those of a donkey until the room shook with mirth. A licking over, the sun came out again behind his homely face, and he looked about for new folly to kick his heels at. Such brains as he had ran down into his heels mostly, and it took a smart horse to outstrip him when, lunch-box in hand, he flew each morning schoolwards to the inevitable whippings that awaited him. The Lord has given to few of His children such capacity for running thus cheerfully to the daily disasters that life turns out to be. And in these darkly enlightened days society has taken to segregating such children as Albert from their more regular and drabber brethren; and so some of the ancient sunshine has gone from the world.

The school had its villain, too. He was the son, as it so often runs, of a pillar and deacon of the country church and the warden of the school. He felt his father's position so heavily that he cut the birch rods for our corduroys. He stood in strongly with those teachers who came to the school with the preconception that they were lion tamers. He it was who told the wielder of authority how we had come two hours early and thrown stones

with painstaking labour into the chimney top until we had clogged the flue above the stovepipe vent. He it was who proposed the plan for a half hour "nooning" in place of our hour recess, which was all too short as it was for the games we had to play. But it turned out that his own tail wore out the rods he had cut for ours. There were such things as after hours when teachers were gone home to their week's boarding place, and justice came into her own. His father could not always be coming to fetch him safe home behind his team of bays. Some days it rained.

One boy, who stood at the opposite pole of the universe from our tattletale, was all whipcord and blue steel. He could whip any two of us together, and he did so. And he could stand by one and keep the faith in the hour when the arch of heaven tottered. For all his strength, strange shynesses and reticences were in him when he stood apart from us on the windy skylines of our days like the king that he was. So Hector must have walked on the Trojan walls. His nature was as square and as full of possibilities of comfort as a Maine farmhouse. No meanness or bullying ever went unpunished by him. Perhaps he was the finest teacher we were ever to have.

There were girls as well as boys to build up our glory. One had a nose that made me, for some unknown reason, think of morning-glories. But I kept that thought care-

fully to myself. She once put her arm across my shoulders as we walked the ruts to school. I liked it at the time; but some prying eyes were open, and it took me a year to live down that blunder of hers. Another girl was plump and fresh as a pan of new biscuits. Her lunch-box showed the reason. It must have snowed meat and drink in her home as it did in the house of Chaucer's Franklin. Another girl was as wild as a thistle and as hard to handle; she led the boys into building a fire in May that, transported by the teacher into our Gargantuan stove, we had to sit close over until our very souls perspired.

All of us were full of a wiry clannishness that has stood the older stock of America in good stead, a temper old as Anglo-Saxon England and alive in the town meetings of New England to this day. Independence and democracy were in us, too, I think. It was dangerous for one of us to come to school too conscious of new clothes or special possessions. I was unwise enough once to strut like a young rooster in the striped sweater which my father, like Joseph's, had put upon me in his love. My garment came to great grief. Full of exuberance, we were full of a grim reserve and silent loyalties. Barring Albert, the boys could take the bitterest punishment without flinching and with the mask of a smile.

We could act like young Vandals; yet when it came right down to the business of books, I think we loved

them as most of us have not loved them since. We had to work hard at home, most of us; we had to walk miles for our learning; we worked at the desks as we worked at the sawhorse. And in that little house on the hungry half acre we met Jason and Arthur, Hercules and Thor, the granite-faced men of Hawthorne's tales and the hard-headed builders of our own country; and the narrow fields we lived in stretched out to meet a bigger world that some of us were going to walk some day, and a world that only poets and dreamers have ever set foot upon. The two miles of pinewoods and the bay I had to cross each night were peopled for me with folk long dust on the other side of the earth, with folk who had never lived in these fields where men are so quick to grow old and roses to fall. Demigods and men who have made the history books seemed close enough to come upon in the next thicket then. I know that the teaching we had was homespun. Our morning's music might often be only a camp-meeting hymn of redemption and bare grace. But we sang it like the Halleluiah Chorus from Händel.

Looking back, I can see as clear as if set in crystal the gentians that came out with blue lace in the September fields to call us back to the cracked doorstep and the battered pail of water for our refreshment and the one long-handled dipper for us all. And I know now that

the dog-eared books that smelled like learning to us *were* learning. It has been my good fortune to read in famous houses of learning since; but I have never known, even in Duke Humfrey's room in the Bodleian, such an edge on my appetite for books as in that one-room school-house where boys sat on patches and read so hard that they broke the backs of their books. The last flowers of the year, the wistful, faded asters, half buried the door. Hungry flowers. . . . Perhaps we were like them. Hunger can be a thing precious beyond all other things.

CAPTAIN PYE



Captain Pye

It is hard to conceive of mystery in a man who is named Pye. But I have known a man whose soul was always midnight and the full of the moon who had such a legacy from his ancestors.

There was little to suggest the mysterious in his open face; he had as twinkling a pair of eyes in his head and as open and aboveboard sort of moustache as you will meet in a day's journey. But that face was a curtain hung before deep secrets. Those who knew him well had given him his title of captain for the reason that he did business in remote and gloomy waters, along vanishing paths of moonlight, among folks the day never shines upon.

Captain Pye was a man who had been bitten more deeply by the bug of buried treasure than other men of his kind who take life easy on the rocky Maine littoral

and wear hair and moustaches burnt yellow by the everlasting sun. He had made a by-path of superstition into a highroad of life. In his pirates he lived and moved and had his being. For him the earth was nothing more than a place to hide wealth in. Nor were his pirates limited to the handful of men in bandanas and earrings who walked with the conventional swagger of Kidd. He believed that all men have the pirate in them at the proper quarter of the moon; he believed that all men are secretive and make it their chief business in life to bury precious things away. . . . If one could lay hold upon it, I think there is a philosophy hidden somewhere in his credo. . . . No cellar too green or too pastoral with nibbling sheep to be above hoarding a pot of coins in its mounds. No house too poor or too mean in its decay to be innocent of secreted plunder. Any house, so it be tenantless and sliding into ruin, had an aureole around it the colour of the lustre of hidden gold. When man moved out, then mystery moved in to be the tenant of the place. As all abandoned houses become haunted houses for children and for the older and simpler folk of New England, so all houses for Captain Pye became Aladdin's caves. It was as if the beauty and the shining things of life did not appear until a man had left them for good and all. As if the rainbow's end stood always

upon a grave. . . . But I must not try to put wings on a belief that was mortar and brick for Captain Pye.

This captain had the courage to use pick and shovel on his conviction. Of course he did it shyly and only by the light of the full or waning moon; but dig he did, and every last cellar around sooner or later gaped with the pits of his making. In his little house, by the side of the pinewoods that could make up long stories for a boy's ears on a windy day, Captain Pye had a treasure-trove of shards of old pitchers and bowls which had ministered to children now long asleep as graybeards in the acres of oblivion. Perhaps some of these fragments daubed with hand-painted flowers had made a part of the dishes which the Indians had shattered; for some of the cellars around Pye's home were buried under two centuries of earth, and Pye's house itself stood on a "twenty-rod road"—a road cleared of wilderness that space on both sides in order that the arrows of the Redskins might not have deadly effect upon the pale-faced traveller who journeyed with civilization. At any rate, Pye fingered and loved his pieces of pottery and fitted them into his life. He had not come empty away from his digging. Something precious he had. Of course he claimed he cherished them only because they were clues to possible piles of coins, because they may have been the very receptacles of the money. But the truth was not so simple

as that. These things had made a part of the happiness of people long ago; perhaps now, in some dim way a boy or Captain Pye could understand but would never explain, they were making a new portion of weal. Other fingers had handled these things; and they had felt felicity. . . . When you come right down to it, there is a sort of poetry in cannibalism. Here is man's strength—does it not become a part of me when I have made the man one with my flesh?

Captain Pye was after money; and he found poetry. He would have been the last to admit it, but the search was the treasure; and the precious things he could not find he heaped up in his soul until it was full to overflowing. And so he could never leave off being a boy. I think that is the secret of his face that hung smiling before the mystery of his life by moonlight. Boy's treasures are their brightest under the moon. Take them into the sunlight, and they turn into tinsel and fairy gold. All boys hide their precious things away; boys have the perpetual pirate in them; the secret thing is the thing beautiful evermore.

Anyway, my captain was quick to fasten himself upon that rare man who had enough of the boy in him to make a friend. All the boys of the neighbourhood he loved and brought up. He held them open of mouth with his stories of digging for treasure. To be sure, when it came

to partnering him with a spade under the waning moon, that was another thing. I remember how Captain Pye rose suddenly from the bushes by the roadside to ask me to go over to the Orr-place cellar with him late one night when I was bicycling home ahead of a rising thunderstorm. I used the thunder lifting its white head in the west as my excuse to be gone. Yet *listening* to treasure hunting was all that a boy could ask of bliss.

I am mighty glad I never did get courage up to go with the man to lay bare the bones of old houses. I should have spoiled his sport by being at his elbow, and the task that would have flowered later into the shining lies of his narration would have been a blight and a mockery. For Captain Pye was the most artistic and thorough liar that ever lived. He was a poet, that was the long and the short of the matter. An hour of turning over old potsherds became a visit with the *Arabian Nights* when he described it. And since Pye was well-nigh an illiterate man, I take my hat off to his fertile mind; the "hants" and the jinns of his stories did not come from any *Arabian Nights* at all; he made them all up out of whole cloth.—Don't try to tell me that we have hated titles in this Land of the Free since the days of the Third George. We New Englanders are the first to recognize princely qualities when we meet them and to call them princely names. How else does it come that we give any

outstanding man, good at the tiller or good at telling tales, the title of captain? Captain Pye came honestly by his.

A prince of liars he was, and I never dare to hope I shall meet his like again. He was Paul Bunyan in the flesh. The things that man hadn't done and seen! It takes an illiterate man, a man who is boy enough to be above books and learning, to make an epic. I am glad I had a chance to live part of my boyhood in the *Odyssey*. And this *Odyssey* was all the more pleasing because it was out of the sun, because it was laid in the land of the shadows and the moon.

For all his catholicity in "hants" and "cusses," the captain was at his vivid best when he was trafficking in pirates pure and simple. "Godfrey Diamonds!"—that was his favourite oath, and it set off most of his sentences—"If you want to see a sight to make your eyeballs water, just you sail out under the lee of Lumbo Ledges when the wind is north-northwest! You can look down there through forty fathoms of the smartest, clearest, crystallest water and see the white skulls of pirates a-grinning up at you. Their eyes are sharper'n gimlets and the Old Boy in them bigger'n a woodchuck. All bare bones but their eyes. They looked so hard with them eyes that they turned into tourmaloons and emeralds and diamonds. Cross my heart and hope to die!—You go out

there and look for yourself. North-northwest wind, mind you!"

You could always tell what islands the pirates had been on in that wilderness of islands in Casco Bay. Sooner or later the men who made a profession of going about and collecting Spanish silver-pieces and golden crucifixes and hiding them in all intriguing places found it necessary to cache also the unhallowed remains of the ladies they had acquired as incidentals in their business. Wherever those poor creatures lie buried no grass will grow forevermore. You can tell to the inch which of them were the tall and queenly ladies, for the blighted soil turns black above them. You can trace something of their beauty—and the pirates had an eye for beauty—in their contours that blacken the earth. And when you come upon such places, where no birds ever sing, you may call off your treasure hunt for the day. No proper pirate ever mixed his amours with his gold. The two lie apart.

Time and time again Captain Pye had been within a step of the hoard of hoards of all the pirates. He had never quite gotten his hand upon it; hence life was still a glory and a catch in the breath. The father in the *Pearl* did not grasp his jewel or reach the heavenly city; when he sought to cross over the stream, he awoke. There was always at the last moment something to hold Captain Pye back, some rapture or some terror. After all, we

must not lay hold upon the things we love and worship in this world, or we shall have ashes in our hands.

That treasure greater than all the other smaller caches of coins and chalices, which the captain had often seen here and there and had scorned to seize as too easy game, lay in a lonely place at the centre of Whaleboat Island. The captain's best story was the story of the memorable night when he almost had it:

"The tide was up, and the moon was full. I rowed close in under the hemlocks and moored my skiff. The earth seemed to quake-like when I stepped out on it. But I was reckoning on seeing what I had come to see. First I went over grass, and my shadow crotched where I crotched and did what I did. Then it was junipers and ledges to bark your shins. Then it was a quag-bog and black lilies like you never saw by broad daylight a-quivering there. Then it was woods, high woods and dark as a pocket. Hoot-owls, maybe, but not another sound. It got cold as Charity. Then—Godfrey Diamonds!—the hairs fetched up stiff on my back! Somebody opened up and begun to sing. Sing till your blood run cold. Pretty, but awful high up and lonesome. The way the wind howls around the house in the Winter—'no pork, no 'lasses.' I crept up on the singing. All of a sudden I see a light. Like rotten wood you see glowing in the woods at night, or a codfish, maybe, lying in a dark cupboard. Dim. I

edged up. Mother of Moses!—there was a handsome little tyke a-setting on his bottom and warbling fit to die, but his head wan't where his head ought to be. He had it in his lap a-holding it in his little hands like it was one of them punkin jacky-lanterns! Just a stump where his head ought to grow. But he could sing—that laddie. His lips like a bell and his eyes shut tight. After a bit, I see he was a-setting on a keg. Then I guessed what he was up to. He was set there to keep an eye on the treasure chist after the pirates had sliced off his head even with his ears. Sure as preaching, there was the chist I had been looking for all my born days. A big wooden chist with the spike heads a-shining and the big brass bands all around. Right in plain sight at the lad's feet. But down in a hole, sort of. Then I looked, and I see there was three steps leading down to it, just right to step down on comfortable, and a nice handy iron ring in the top of the chist to heave it up by. I watched the boy for a minute and see he wan't going to stand in my way. He just kept on letting the song out. So I stepped down two of the steps. But you can bet your sweet big-toes Captain Pye wan't a-going no further. I know what them third steps is! They sink down the minute you step on them, and down you go into the bowels of the earth, and there won't never be no grave dug for you! And I had too much sense to put any fingers of mine on that ring in

the chist: Them rings stick to your fingers till Kingdom Come. So I just stood still and reached round and fetched up a rock as big as your cranium, and I let her fly smack onto that there box. Ker-bang! Up flew the cover, and out went my eyes. Godfrey! What a sight I see! A million rubies and onyxes, jacinths and hyacinths, lapis Lazuruses, emeralds and turkusses! And the dollars!—they was big as cartwheels and yaller as the moon. And right in the middle of all them jools was a skull as big as an ox's! Joshua Jugful! I wanted them shiny things! I picked up a limb and poked it through a gold ring you could slip over your wrist with a diamond blazing bigger'n a goose egg on it.

"I had just rigged that thing on the branch when that headless boy raised a screech to wake the dead, and I dented the earth with the butt of my breech. For I heard them coming. I never had seen them yet. I never see them then. I hope I never do see them. But I heard them coming. Golly mighty, wan't they coming! And wan't they hopping mad! Trees two hundred feet high was a-crashing down like splinters. The old bull-spruces was a-touching their tops to the ground. The moon came out where the trees went down. And yelling!—Godfrey Diamonds, hell was all loose and coming. Well! I guess I picked up my feet and put them down in new places! Frequent! I didn't bother about no ring. I was out of

them spruces before you could say scat and over the quagbogs and over the medders. I tore my painter loose and started to shove off the skiff. And then, you might not believe it, but that tide that stood at tip-top high water mark ran off over the skyline like steam out of a kittle! Thunder and lightning!—the water was all gone out of the bay! But I heard them coming, and I strained my breeches fit to split, and I started a-shoving. I shoved that boat faster'n chain lightning off'n a greased pig's back, and I never let up till I was safe in thirty fathoms. Even then I could hear them things a-snorting and a-churning up the water till my blood run cold. But I got away. . . . Boy, you can look upon the man as has seen Captain Kidd's own chist and is here to tell the tale. But I've got white hairs on my head!"

I always made the captain come with me a piece on my way home from his cabin after dark.

I guess the captain is still in his full vigour and growing more epic with the years. I saw him recently, and though he has left the pinewoods cabin and is working at the tame trade of carpentering in an unsightly section of a growing town, he still draws the boys around him. What need has he for books or travel or wife or children, when he has his imagination to take around with him in his head? His hairs are all white now, but he must be even more of a boy. Some men there are whom the gods love.

AUNT EMMA



Aunt Emma

Everyone ought to have at least one Aunt Emma. That is, if he is going to make more of life than a carnival of fleshpots. If he has his heart set on winning races or a wife worth her salt or the applause from that small but clear-voiced Cato, conscience, that presides in the little senate of his heart. For it takes such an aunt to condition one in the old Spartan way, to trim one's soul down to the essentials.

Aunt Emma was not a steady diet of my boyhood. That would have taken the edge off her, and she would have failed in her mission. She made periodical descents upon our hearth. I identify her most with the season of sulphur and molasses; she seems to have chosen that time of the year when our stamina was most in need of a stimulant, when a windy March had fallen quiet into the ruts and glums of early April. Or when the smell of dead

grass hung over the world and the ground crystals of the first frosts made one's footing uneven in the garden plot. Her coming scattered the garrulity and discords of brothers and sisters on the verge of civil war for the want of something better to do. She left a holy silence, a profound harmony among us, when she packed up her portmanteau, and such manners as were a marvel to see. We all heaved enormous sighs, but our backs were the straighter for her visit with something resembling tempered steel.

I think, when I try to set down her qualities in some sort of order, that I should put as the foremost her reverence for authority. With her the fact of the parent was an act of God. To lift one's will against one's begetter was an enormity beyond conception. Children were not ever to be told the reason for a mother's or a father's command; the bare command was enough. It was the scene in the Garden played over again, and each child was a small Adam or Eve. Nor did Aunt Emma stop with parents. From them she passed to all elders. The rankest outsider, even he who wore the cast-off trousers of *pater familias* and pitched the *pater's* hay at five dollars a week and found, had the divine right to order the *pater's* children to toe the line and say nothing. The lady who washed for the family had the same nimbus of authority. And when it came to blood elders—say aunts, for example—

then the necessity of obedience became pure adamant. The right to command increased, too, with the fading or the thinning of one's hair. Age was holy stuff. As if every person with the intellectual capacity of a six-year-old had the right to lay down the law just because he happened to wear a moustache! A woman with no more purpose in her cosmos than a turkey-hen to command on account of her gray hairs! After age, came people in authority in the community, in the school, in the church. Then respect for all laws from those of the pantry shelf to those Moses staggered down Sinai with. Life, as we youngsters looked out upon it through Aunt Emma's eyes, was like nothing so much as a nest of little laws enclosed in bigger, and so on out to the farthest stars. Lucifer, verily, saw no place to lay his head in this nest of boxes called cosmos. Creation for Aunt Emma was graduated obediences. Nor was all this enough. Laws, in her opinion, had existed in perfection from the beginning. There was no change or shadow of change. Tradition gave us our birthnight bath and laid us in our shrouds in just such a way and no other. And tradition was always right. What a woman to plan a universe! Yet, taken in brief biannual doses, she was the best training the houseful of young wildcats that we were, that hunted in packs, could possibly have had. A woman like Aunt Emma could cheat the highest gallows.

Order—that was the thing Aunt Emma stood for. “Order is heaven’s first law.” I can hear her declaim that sentence now, her square spectacles raying Apocalyptic beams from her severely parted hair. Each day had its exact ritual of foods, face-cloths, clothes, books, risings and sittings, goings and comings. The harmony held from the putting of one’s right leg first into one’s breeches till the turning down of one’s bedspread to the lower right-hand corner. Even play was just another instrument in the orchestra of the day. One felt like snapping the strings and kicking in the heads of the kettledrums. There was no place for the uncertain heart-beat of random adventure or the ecstasy of idleness. “Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do.” The world spun about as regularly as a top, why should not children?

To achieve this harmony, for which even small children inclining to negligence in buttons and knicker straps were designed, discipline was the thing. Discipline we got, in every waking moment. The table was a major field; we could put our hands over the edge only to the wrists, could dip our soup in one direction only, be seen only and not heard. We had to rise into the chill preceding the sun. We had to go to bed just when the stars were coming out. We had to fetch in so much wood. We had to wash the tender places behind our ears. We

had to read so many books because they were dull. We had to learn so much of the multiplication table. We had to do the thing we felt the least like doing at the time it least suited us to do anything at all. We had to form fours, I tell you. If there was broken glass, we had to tread on it; if there were hot coals, hold them in our hands; if pepper, snuff it up. For the unpleasant was good to harden us. We were handled like potatoes in the late Winter; we were put through a "course of sprouts." I know what sort of a place Sparta was; I lived in it a month every year.

Now that I look back on the rigours Aunt Emma presided over, I can see that we were being trained in the art of being a New Englander. New England's apples are sweeter for the thinness of the soil. The sweetnesses of adversity range all the way from the New England weather to the shape of New England chairs. To study this doctrine of the sanctity of uncomfortableness one has only to open the door of an old-fashioned parlour such as Aunt Emma was proud to call her own. It was a room not for the living, first of all, but for the dead. Wreaths of bygone uncles' hair were shrined here. There was the bass viol no one might play again now that its owner was gone; its strings lay twisted and broken. The big Bible, commanding a table of its own, held the alphas and omegas of the departed; death dates balanced birth

dates neatly. The album was a walk through the cemetery. Even in the faces that were set forth there with the light of life still upon them there was that indefinable look one associates with martyrdom. These worthies had the expression precisely as if they were saying, "We don't *quite* expect you to live up to us, but it will be good for you to try your hardest." Of course, this expression was partly due to the length of the poses these patient folks had had to endure. It was no matter of a careless moment having one's face made permanent in the older days. I remember one great-uncle whose likeness was always a favourite with me because of a fly that had gotten himself immortalized on the man's waistcoat. It had taken courage to stand that fly! But the length of the pose, assisted sometimes in less rigorous decades nearer our own by those clamps to seize and hold the cranium from behind, does not tell the whole story by a long shot. Photographs were rarer things then, to be undertaken only at great and grave moments, at the crises of a wedding, a graduation, or such. They were milestones in life. It was like sitting for one's monument. But even this fact does not fully account for that martyr's look. Over and above this length and momentousness of the photographic moment there abides a facial seriousness that makes one imagine the subject standing on the seaward end of a plank over waters that sharks haunt. Life

was a sterner proposition in every way than now. And pleasure more of a kinsman to pain. No wonder they expect less of their descendants! Why, there is not a man alive in these days of quick razors who could bear up under the moustaches they wore. A few centuries more of this everlasting shaving night and morning, and we shall be where Rome was, abject before whiskered Goths and Vandals. Fortunately for us at the moment the rising Orientals and Africans do not run to whiskers! But our day will come.

The severity of Aunt Emma's parlour, and of parlours like hers, did not end with the album portraits. The room was unheated. An ideal place to see the flower gardens of Jack Frost in Winter! The blinds were kept closed for fear things should fade. The scallop chairs were not to be imagined for a moment as places to sit. The flutings in their bottoms saw to that. The back of the sofa was not to be used even in the courtships that sometimes shared the room with funerals; for no one would care to go forth from the arms of his beloved with the intaglio of vine clusters in his back. Of course, there were some objects less austere than the haircloth that harked back to the Mediæval eremite. There was, in Aunt Emma's parlour at least, a pencil with a glass top in which one could see Jacob's Ladder on Mount Washington if he held it to his one eye and squinted with the

other. There were also West Indian beans, black of eye, that stirred and hopped with the heat of a boy's hand. And the saw of a swordfish. Venice in panorama. But such things had to be looked at in a hurry, with shiverings that might be the prelude to pneumonia. And the rarity of their appeal was a tragedy in itself.

That sense of sitting in austere judgment upon life that her album portraits had Aunt Emma brought into the very core of our life on her periodic visits with us. I am sure that even my father trembled at his sister's approach. She knew him too well, and she had the holiness of having come two years earlier into the world to give power to her words. My mother dreaded her sharp eyes and frank tongue. As for us, we were in mortal fear. It takes an aunt to see family faults—and point them out. And when that aunt is old enough to look upon herself as the family head, then a wig and a high seat become her indeed. Aunt Emma felt called upon to tell the bitter truth; she told it with proper names applied to each who needed it; and she did it before the assembled clan. I can think of only one institution to which to compare her and her devastating verdicts, and that is the raking over the coals that my Oxonian college head used to give us all as we sat together just before going down for a vacation. On this day of reckoning we caught it in turn

in our tenderest places. But by that same token I think we were more nearly a family than any other educational unit I have ever known. There could have been nothing finer than Aunt Emma to build up the morale and determine the contours of that thing called a family.

There was a residuum in that strong arbiter of our family, Aunt Emma, which I must declare here, and bury it in the midst of the catalogue of her beneficent traits, which was nothing more than plain crankiness. My aunt was so straight in her will that she leaned backwards into sheer wilfulness. She liked to chew the bullets of her righteous reproof to make them tear as well as pierce. She had a head very narrow at the back; and if I know anything about craniology, this perversity of hers had its seat there. She took delight—Dryden's delight and the delight of all satirists—in commencing the operation of pulverizing a person by praising the few, the very few, good points that person had. But it is an unfairness to a great woman to dwell upon this small imp of the perverse that lodged in the pavilions of her mind; and it would have taken a much larger demon to spoil those habitations of wisdom.

Should I stop here with this catalogue of the major virtues of a magnificent aunt, I would be merely drilling a cold likeness for her tombstone. I must try to present the lady as a lady alive. It was in her little traits that

she was most unique, the matters of minor magnitude that compose genius.

Aunt Emma saved things. When I say that, I speak in volumes. It did not matter that the things she saved were often of the supremest inconsequence. It was the saving that counted. First in the catalogue of things she hoarded, until her rooms in her own house had only alleyways through them, I should put old newspapers. They bulked the largest. Nothing is so sorry as an old newspaper. To turn over these pages of print with their yellowed edges where the air has begun its charitable task of oblivion, to read the accounts of events that once loomed so large but are now reduced to trivialities, to study the past with the microscopic eye of a single day—that is to court jaundice of the spirit and to walk in the Valley of Dry Bones. But my aunt never did this. She saved the papers because it gave her a satisfaction to see them neatly stacked up in piles. I think she had the *Boston Transcript* from its beginning. But she was catholic; she even saved the town weekly and the Sunday School journals. She pretended to us that old papers might come in handy sometimes as wrappers. But she never wrapped anything in them in her life. She would have carried the wash through the streets in a bird cage before she would have broken a single phalanx of her journals.

But the items of her saving were legion. Item: paper quills. She always had a vase on every mantel full of these. She was an artist at spiralling them up and folding over the ends to keep them from unwinding. She set us to the task. She left our house bristling with them when she retired after a visit. She produced enough of these tapers in one year to light all the open fires in America. Even when matches had evolved upwards from the eight-day variety that had a blue period of funk and stench before the flame was born and had become instantaneous and odourless, she went blithely along twisting up her lighters. Item: dishes. She had them assorted by barrels. Here again she was catholic. She ranged all the way from the cheapest and tawdriest, from moustache-cups and plates with presidential physiognomies, up to the precious Crown Derby platters my grandfather had bought in England with the bounty King George had given him for service in the Royal Navy he had been impressed into as a Yankee seaman, up to the egg-dish with the hen as large as life on its cover that we children were allowed to handle only on occasions of good behaviour so infrequent as to be epochal. Item: rags. No dress Aunt Emma had ever worn but had its memorial in her bags. These she did use; and we could read back through the years of our aunt's life as we lay with her patchwork above us in bed and walk over her years in

the oval rugs of her braiding. Item: corks. Stoppers she had for more bottles than would ever be. She kept them in pasteboard cartons on every shelf. Item: bottles themselves, from those flat, round ones, so beloved of fishermen because they fit a rear trouser pocket, that had housed Jamaica gin, to fluted, thin columns that had held peppersauce.

Item: buttons. We knew no greater treat for rainy days than to be allowed an hour with a button-bag of Aunt Emma's. Those buttons of my youth were art museums in microcosm. I remember whole scenes, Winter landscapes with skaters, ships with many masts sailing a wide sea, clusters of grapes and other pieces of still life set forth on individual buttons. Coral, pearl, jet; plump ones, emaciated; and everywhere wooden forms to be quilted as one's fancy chose. The wheels and pictures, carts and tables we made of those things! Item: hoop-skirts, bustles, and defunct bonnets. The evolution of a nation and the progress of pride were in these things. Bonnets scarce big enough to cover the head of a three-months child which had once perched upon the small top-knot grown women had worn at the top of their skulls. Skeletons of perished vanities! Bustles are by far the saddest of such things. After fingering them one feels more gently towards the Hottentots who set plates in the upper lip, towards the Chinese ladies who teetered

about on broken big-toes. Kinsmen we are, after all. To rummage in Aunt Emma's attic was to take a course in the University of Human Nature. Only such a course leaves one with the impression of the elegiac nature of civilization.

Item: tin foil, neatly rolled into symmetrical pellets.
Item: old letters. The very *lacrimae rerum*, these. Valuable only to the ghouls that biographers can be. Unburied bodies craving the favour of a handful of earth or the sacrament of fire. These things, at last, Aunt Emma used. The authors of them were as real as friends still in the land of the living; they were quoted to us constantly; and as many of them were much older than Aunt Emma, even, their words had an authority that was annihilating. Item: account books. Here was the history of every penny Aunt Emma had handled in her fifty years of housekeeping, the history of every grist that had poured out of the grooves of her husband's mill-wheel. The millstone had lain ruined these years out under the frosts and the starlight; but that was nothing to my aunt. She kept the tale of grists hard by the Bible.
. . . Bought of Deacon Snow two firkins of butter. . . .
Sold Mrs. Failing Merriman one doz. my best White Leghorn eggs, the long ovals, for her Spring setting.
. . . And the butter was turned to flesh and bone and Mrs. Merriman to the early snowdrops in the Topsham

cemetery; the White Leghorn eggs to chicks, to roosters mostly, since that is the irony of things when one wants to raise laying hens, and the roosters had joined Hannibal and John Paul Jones and the other high-steppers of history. But they were still eggs and Deacon Snows and Mrs. Merrimans to this lady. In her ledgers Aunt Emma could trace the disintegration of a family from the time it began to eat two eggs apiece for breakfast. She could suck philosophy from figures. After all, it is such homely and simple treasures that make the real *Lares* and *Penates* that constitute a home. But only Aunt Emma's kind of a home. It must be a home with roots. Woe to those who should have to move such! My aunt never did. She would have died first; and she did.

Item: gravies. For surely these must be listed with precious things saved. We younger relatives found the odd saucers of juices saved from many meats among the best savings of all, once they were put together into toothsome ensembles. Item: "emptings." What these were I am at a loss to say. I am not even sure of the spelling of the word. But New Englanders will know what I mean. As I remember, it was a gradual accretion of different materials to help in the miracle of "riz-bread" of the old school—sour milk, curds, something like these. Item: dried apples. If all the rest were useless, these alone

would have justified Aunt Emma in her habit. She hung them up on strings in the attic, and they squizzled into brown bits like flakes of mummy; but when they were put into water, they became round apples again and the vitals of pies of the first water. Our own attic beams were festooned with them when Aunt Emma left us after her Fall visit.

I have come logically to another touch of the genius of this aunt. I think that it was her saving things that had made this woman one of the best cooks who ever swam into my ken. It is the housewife who utilizes every last drop of gravy and every last marrowbone that becomes the finished culinary artist. Witness the French peasant women who can produce a soup for Lucullus out of dry bread, cabbage, and water. Aunt Emma could cook anything in such a way that the odour of it made water come to the mouth and yearning to the heart. This art of hers sweetened the hours of her visits as her discourse never could. Master in all dishes that New England creates, she was especially great in her cod-lead dumplings. The name is a forbidding one; but my aunt's creations took their name from their shape, not their weight. They were of the likeness of those pear-shaped sinkers on cod-lines; yet when they came reeking of savouriness from meat gravies they had the lightness

of thistledown. Somewhere along the way of fire they had exploded internally, and the flour in them put the airiest of breakfast foods to shame. Aunt Emma had also the master touch in smothering eels in their own juices, abetted by salt pork, so that we were not surprised when we read in Dickens' *Child's History* that King John went to meet his Maker after a dish of stewed eels. Salt pork, I think, was the philosopher's stone of this lady's cooking, as it is for all the more venerable New England cooks. Give a New England wife a barrel of salt pork, and each day becomes a matter of three golden hours of congregation at table.

Artist at buttressing life with food, Aunt Emma was also a master at buttressing it about with herbs medicinal and propitious. There was not a disease in the calendar but she could face it and come off with flying banners with teas steeped from the flowers she had gathered in the gardens and fields. She met the perils of all the months with pungent healing. These herbs were the strongest—I shall not say the best—of all the many things she saved. Aunt Emma inclined towards the aromatic plants. It was not an idle gift which that one of the three wisemen brought; myrrh had a Biblical equality with gold. I know of no book this side of the *Anatomy of Melancholy* to stand beside the lexicon of this woman's cures pharmaceutical. She was a walking drugstore, and such a one

as smelled of New England fields: hops for the head and all that ails it, artemesia for the liver, wormwood and pennyroyal for the stomach, tamarisk for the spleen, fennel and anise seed for the wind. . . . But Burton must strike his colours to her. For she could go even his delectable conserves of violets one better and mingle dried petals of the wild rose with new honey and juices of the grape old enough to be full of inspiration. That was her cure for sore throat! She was not above throwing in a handful of ground caraway seeds into any concoction she had under way. She knew no moderation in her pharmaceutical frenzy. She came, like Burton, very near to the essence of poetry when she had her hands in medicines. Fomentations, odoraments, music, and the murmur of waters. . . . She knew nature was the healer extraordinary; so she merely tried to bring all of nature that she could indoors.

Each day Aunt Emma looked upon as a field of battle in which to exercise her leechcraft. I think she gloated when the sleet came that meant wet feet and skins to try her magic upon. It was not for nothing that she chose to make her two visits at the dangerous turning points of the year. And knowing us children, she knew she would have a fertile terrain for her manœuvrings; we were capable of collecting everything in the way of distempers. Like Burton she did not hesitate to prescribe

for any ailment however constitutional or elusive or large. She stood ready to set her wits against even such broad foes as Burton adduces among the causes of melancholy: the Devil, stars, old age, woes hereditary, nurses, fairy tales they tell us, scoffs, loss of liberty, poverty, death of friends, a blow on the head, an ague, the kick of a horse, a too coy mistress, a faithless wife, a wife too loving, one too little, children, a hot brain, an infected liver, a too hot sun, wines, study, idleness, onions, garlic, labour, passion, spleen, bowels, a bad diet, too rich food, bread that is too coarse, unclean water, beef, pork, sorrow, bacon fat, hot air, cold air, vehement desires, beans, all shellfish, anger, sharp sauces, unseasonable exercise, gaming, cabbage, melons, pride, soused meats, and religion! Against the evil effects of such things, from which the Lord knows not one of us is safe, she had, I am confident, a cure.

For pennyroyal, that little New England flowering staff with pale blue stars, Aunt Emma had a passion just short of idolatry. She pronounced it "pennyryal." She put it powdered into everything. Sage she gathered and sassafras. I should like to estimate how many cups of tea brewed from that bulb I have drunk in my time; but I shall not for fear no one would credit me. But yarrow, or "yarrar" as it came from her tongue, was her

sine qua non. It was the ground-floor of all her remedies. Her attic, as ours, was always hung with witch-brooms of this herb. I cannot think of old trunks but I smell its poignant fragrance.

One remedy of this aunt is an heirloom of the family. "Composition." Little jars of it are always turning up in the homes to which we children have emigrated out of that little town of our colthood. And Aunt Emma's fine scrollwork in penmanship gives directions for taking on every jar. "Composition" is my aunt's best monument. It was a cure for all the family of colds. We took it just at the foot of the stairs, hot, with a blanket over the shoulders and premonition in our vitals. We drank it to the dregs without stopping—as Oxonians "floor a scone"—for he who broke off would not drink again. It was camouflaged with milk and sugar, but these things were the kiss of Judas. It went down like larva and brought fierce tears to the eyes. My father said it was like a red-hot torchlight procession. But the metaphor does not do justice to its heat. A cold that could resist the flare of its arrival in the insides was a cold to be respected. It was made up of all sorts of things. The seeds that carry flames in their hearts were united in it from the ends of the earth. Cinnamon, cassia, cloves, quinine, aloes, and all the peppers, red Cayenne mostly,

but also black, gray, and brown. Madagascar kissed Algiers; Venezuela, Sumatra. Once only have I been nigh to meeting its equal in fire. That was a cigarette a Senegalese officer gave me in a trench near the *Chemin des Dames*. Liquid fire indeed!—the Germans had no monopoly of it.

I have set these medicines of Aunt Emma down here at length because they were all of a piece with her character. Life for her was militancy and fire. Her tents were always pitched for war. And these stern remedies of hers did but reflect the sternness of her soul.

Out of all the odd and whimsical traits of this aunt, out of her militant uncomfortableness, her fetishes of authority and her set ways, now that years have done their artist's work, there emerges for me a real and splendid woman. A great woman, even, had her part been played upon a larger stage than that of a single family. Out of the rock, sweet water. Manna and quails in the desert. For she did leave her mark upon all those she touched in life, a mark like that on old Sheffield. I know that she did much to build up that intangible thing, will, in one, at least, who had an aptitude for becoming a natural-born, happy-go-lucky loafer. If to-day I seat myself and write out the notes that I should like to put off, for the sake of early trout, till to-morrow, I am paying a tribute to her memory surely.

But Aunt Emma did more than discipline one into doing a task on time. She did a more fundamental thing. She taught one that out of the rigour of repression comes strength to take one to war or to the still sterner issues of life. She taught one that the taking of life as a discipline is the way to a comeliness and a joy that are not to be had at the ends of other roads. The granite of the Puritans was in her backbone. It is a granite the world needs especially to-day when so many things—radios and vehicles that go like the wind and go cushioned on air—make it so easy to imagine one is really living when one is merely moving about and existing. Aunt Emma was the woman Milton should have married. The woman at the other pole of the universe from Mary Powell. She approached beauty through the harmonies of law and order; her intellect held the rein always on the horses of her soul. She liked neat things, well-mannered children at table, children that could be fresh and blooming and yet decorous and willing to do as they were told; she liked such a trim and ordered social landscape as one finds in *Il Penseroso*. Her cooking and her medicines—who knows what eloquence might not have passed over from them into the epic of religion! In many ways Aunt Emma was a woman the antithesis of a mother; dry of breast but full of the fire of a love of another sort; no

coddler of children, but a sort of individual human *Alma Mater*, the pattern of the college. So, seen down the perspective of the years, she walks with love about her,

“Stern Daughter of the Voice of God!”

AMATEURS IN ARCADY



Amateurs In Arcady

Jeffery Farnol and the wild geese were to blame. The arrows of the Spring were coming north over the college pines earlier that year than usual. The March vacation lay heavy upon us. Night-times we read the *Broad Highway* and the *Amateur Gentleman*, sprawling along the windy hearth, until our blood ran moonlight and frenzy. Dick searched for a Virgil book in which he could inscribe his name and have it ready to carry to the four corners of the earth as his talisman and quote it to startled rustics by forlorn firesides to remind them gently that he was of the blood that was blue, for all his temporary gypsy exterior. But he could find nothing better than a Virgil "trot" in all the empty fraternity house. He compromised on the *Oxford Book of Verse*, his roommate's, and wrote his name in that. Dan, though, wanted actually to start out on the road. He got together a disreputable suit of clothes; but he packed secretly in his dilapidated grip his brother's afternoon coat, the only

one on the campus, which he had long coveted, and striped pants. His Charmian would not find him unprepared for the subtler occasions of life. The tall hat he couldn't squeeze into the bag, though he tried hard. Dan planned to walk, and at once.

But Sam, the coolest of our quartette, had no such intention. He was for adventure and the open road, but he intended to take his sitting. Of course a car would not do. It would set us apart from nature's simple noblemen of barn and byre. And all the cars left behind during the vacation were tireless or locked up, anyway. Something more bucolic was needed. Sam went down into the town and found it. He came back driving a baker's wagon, bells and all, with a horse mostly blinders and desire hitched to it. When we saw that horse, we knew at once that we were safe from discovery among nature's noblemen. Honestly, when he was unrigged of his harness he was an indecent thing to look upon. He answered to the name of Paul; but when we saw him go for the oats Sam had brought up for his provisioning, we renamed him Apocalypse. He devoured half of his rations, jute bag and all, before we could separate him from them; and even then we had to taper off his meal with the fraternity house supply of rolled oats. Sam was eloquent over his bargain. We were to pay only two dollars a day for the whole rig. But we were not so jubilant

when we thought of the upkeep. Still we had a roof over us, and that was something in case it snowed.

We got our luggage aboard. Sam insisted on taking his phonograph and his Hawaiian records, in spite of our remonstrances that his taste would give us away as exotics. Dick, at the last moment, took *Rabelais* and his twelve volumes of Stevenson, which he had paid a dollar down upon, to keep him in the vagabonding mood. And Dan discarded the modest grip and took a small trunk of clothes that he never could need. He squeezed in the top hat, even. For myself, I took only a walking stick and my flute. I hoped that I could flute for our supper, if worst came to worst, as Oliver Goldsmith fluted for his. And it would be fine to have an instrument along to fire the feet of the rustics and set them dancing their quaint measures on their barn floors. We loaded up with all the canned goods and dry groceries we could find, for we knew that even the most beloved of vagabonds have unholy appetites. We hesitated at taking the house oil-stove, though, and decided to cook more after the open style of your true gypsy. Sam also thought of another indispensable just before we pulled out, his boxing gloves. Remembering the *Amateur Gentleman*, he thought it best to go prepared for the savageries we might encounter and prove ourselves manly gentlemen indeed.

Once aboard, we discovered that our luggage and ourselves were too much for the fragile caravan of cakes. The wheels were rickety, and they dished alarmingly with our weight. So we had to draw lots with straws, all except Sam who had appointed himself the official driver for the whole trip, to see who should walk first. Dick and I got the short ones. We felt that we would rub all the down off our part of the adventure at the outset. The morning sun had not yet thawed the ruts in the road. But we fell in behind the squeaky pie-cart. Sam slapped the reins on Apocalypse's galls. Apocalypse leaned his weight, newly augmented with oats rolled and unrolled, against the harness. We headed into the low sun and adventure.

Then it dawned on us that we had not thought about the way we should go. We drew up to consult. Dan was for the west, for the villages were thicker in that direction, and there were more possibilities of meeting lovely unspoiled girls that way, he thought. He was mindful of the Prince Albert under his seat. We knew what he was thinking. All the rest of us declared that the west was far too sophisticated. Why, thirty miles would find us in a big city. Sam stood up for a southerly route. He had a tooth for steamed clams and cod. Dick and Dan and I ridiculed his proposal. Head for the Atlantic and be at the end of our trip in five or six miles! I pro-

posed that we should go in no set direction at all but follow any road that the wind or destiny pointed out. All the others laughed me to scorn for my nonsense. Destiny indeed! That was all right in books. What, after all, was destiny? Sam believed implicitly in free will. An argument was imminent. And then Dick saved us all by an inspiration. Eastward!—the Land of Evangeline! There romance surely could be found even in this age that goes on rubber cushioned with air. It struck us as a happy solution.

I am afraid that Dick and the rest of us confused the Land of Acadia with the Land of Arcady. And, as the crow flies, I think it was about three hundred miles to the home of Basil the Blacksmith and that mid-Victorian flower, Evangeline! Apocalypse had not that many miles, even had he been well husbanded, which he was not, between him and the grave. But we set off, the five of us, Rosinante and Don Quixote, Stevenson and the donkey, Oliver Goldsmith, and the Beloved Vagabond all rolled together, with our faces—all save Rosinante's—lit with the fire of faith.

We needed that fire to warm us, for the sun, dubious from the first, went into hiding, and the world was a gray keen wind that cut to the bone. Dick and I found that walking wasn't so bad, after all. Dan sat on his trunk with his teeth almost loosened with chat-

tering till he could sit no more. He leaped down and joined us on shanks' mare. On that, Sam pulled up and demanded that we draw lots again, to see who should sit on the seat and drive Apocalypse. He had had enough. No, we said, he had elected himself driver, and far be it from us to dispute with him at this late day. Sam grew savage. But we were granite. We didn't know the fine points of steering a horse by so delicate things as reins, we declared. Sam's profanity came upon him. He jumped down and took the horse by the head. He vowed he'd walk, if he had to drag the brute. So he did, Apocalypse gangling after with careless feet. So now we all footed it, we blithely in front and Sam behind towing the whole rig by the headstall of Apocalypse and saying things no gentleman, even an amateur one, ought ever to say.

Famine came upon us after an hour or two. We had met not a single roadside philosopher masquerading as a tinker. Not a country girl with cheeks like wild roses, not a girl with any sort of cheeks at all. We had fallen in with no children prattling of wiser things than mere grownups can know. We had overtaken no son of a great but falling house striking out on his lone way to glory with the King's English on his tongue and the hired man's second-best suit on his back and a pound of cheese in his pocket to share with the sparrows on the

way. I doubt if we could have overtaken anybody, considering Apocalypse. No simple farmer had opened his golden heart to us in rustic speech. Jeffery Farnol was a liar!

The only people we had met had behaved abominably. A big limousine had slowed down enough in passing us so that we heard a stout dowager titter as she flew past. And a seedy man in a Ford with a face like a raw beefsteak had taken one look at our procession and asked us what the accident was. Accident!—adventure was clearly lost on these groundlings!

The sole cheerful thing about us were the bells on our wagon. They sounded like a perpetual sleigh-ride in our ears. But that made us feel even colder. The bitter wind which had an edge to it like a knife made our eyeballs jingle in company with the bells.

Betrayed by romance, we fell upon our stock of canned goods and comforted our lower natures. Under a fringe of junipers in a sand-pit my wizardry with twigs finally brought forth a blaze. Dan sat so near it that he singed the toes out of his shoes. I turned a tin of tomato soup into an amber cream that put the blue back into our day. I was not so successful with the bacon. It was a mercy we didn't all get trichina—Sam especially, for he fished out the slices at the first sign of brown. We topped off with blackberries drunk cold from the can. Apocalypse

we did not think it advisable to feed. The breakfast he had bolted still showed up plainly abaft his ribs, like a pig in an anaconda. And we did not wish to take any chances with our supplies.

We took to the road again. We relented at last and took turns with Sam in his task of dragging Apocalypse and his baker's appendage through the bleak day. We got ourselves ferried over a river after an uncomfortable moment with an officious small-town constable who thought in his folly that we had stolen the horse. Twilight came upon us in the frozen wastes of swamps. We had planned to sleep under the stars so that we should not miss any likely, gay madman who might come singing down the wind, or a poet at least, to regale us. But there weren't any stars. We now decided to compromise by sleeping in a barn. After all, haymows had their romantic possibilities. But houses we would have none of. It was our luck to find every one of the few feasible barns had a house hitched to it hereabouts. No wonder, in this country where March was so icy. One needed to approach the cows at milking time through a nest of rooms.

But an unattached barn finally appeared. It was near a house with lamplight at the windows; but we prided ourselves upon having crept up on it with masterful strategy. We got Apocalypse up to the blind side, found

a door there, and tried to open it to let our van in. It was one of those doors that run on wheels somewhere aloft. But the four of us could not budge it beyond an opening big enough for one man. Apocalypse could get his long face in and his blinders, but no more. It was tragic. We had to leave the poor beast there with tears in his eyes wedged into the gateway of the promised land. We gave him nearly all of the remaining oats for his supper in compassion.

Once inside ourselves, though, now that the stars had come out, we found that we were to be practically under them, after all. The roof was gone the way of the wind in places. The Great Bear glittered down upon us. It had to be a meal entirely cold, though Dan the irresponsible was all for building a fire on the planking. In the dark, with the Polar gales pouring in from Medicine Hat, or wherever Polar winds are sired, we munched crackers and essayed a tin of sardines with little luck save a broken key. We would probably all get the scurvy from eating so much tinned stuff, anyway, Dick announced bitterly as he threw the can down to crack it open somehow and lost it down through a rift in the floor. In spite of all the rest of us could do, Sam lit a match and started to smoke. In the brief light we could see Apocalypse's eyes yearning at us from the doorway passionately. It was at the moment when we were trying to collect enough

of the musty hay on the floor to cover our numb limbs that we heard a noise like the cracking of the walls of Jericho. And Apocalypse came in. He had come without the baker's wagon, we discovered when we lit up. That lofty vehicle lay in ruins on the two sides of the narrow opening. Apocalypse stood apologetically in our midst with one shaft and stray bits of harness still clinging to his forlorn person. Only one blinder remained. No horse save such a miracle of thinness as he could have done the feat. At that his supper must have had a tight squeeze.

→ We were aghast. We fell to mutual recriminations. Three of us were fully convinced that it was Sam's neglect of his duty as valet to Apocalypse that had wrecked us. Sam raised a high voice in his defence. It was then that there came a gruff hail from the outer darkness—"You young hellions, what are you up to in my barn?"

A farmer about six-foot-four, and still growing, with a beard to match stood on the threshold with a lantern and a pitchfork. We felt that we would have liked to be even smaller than we were at the moment. Apocalypse alone seemed master of himself. He drew himself up and shook off some of the remaining harness.

I guess it was that gesture of our horse which saved the situation. Anyway, the farmer burst out into the laughter of great Jove. He shook his dilapidated building with his mirth. "Wal, I swum!" he roared when at last

he could speak, "did you ever see the likes of that dumb-gutted critter of a horse! I guess *he* knows enough to go in when it rains, door or no door! And ain't he a razer-back!"

We saw the joke, too. The four of us thawed out of our misery at once. "Yes, sir." Dick gave us all away with that *sir*.

"You come along into the house and don't have any more of this monkey business," shouted the farmer. "You come along in and sleep on beds like you'd ought to. You ain't got no call to creep into any barn of mine when the house is full of beds. You come along!"

We went. At the house there was a ticklish moment when we faced a wife who had a less ready sense of humour than her husband's. But Mr. Trufant, our host, overrode all coolnesses and said he would have us a supper on the table in two shakes of a lamb's tail. He was as good as his word. I don't remember what the meal was. It may have been warmed-over beans. But food never tasted so good or went so far with me before.

Our bones thawed. Our tongues loosened and gave us away for the amateur romanticists that we were. Mr. Trufant set the world spinning again. Mrs. Trufant went rather snuffling to bed and left the field to him. And now at the end of our dreary day adventure had come to us. I never hope to meet again such a king of men as that

big farmer was. He might have stepped right off a bench in Odysseus' own ship. He hadn't been a hundred miles from his wind-bitten farm in all his life; but he was as full of wisdom as a man who has been around the earth with his eyes wide open a hundred times. His beard was only a mask; his heart was five years the junior of ours. Here we had stumbled right on a native-born philosopher within a day's walk of a decrepit horse from our college. Down in our hearts we hadn't really believed Jeffery Farnol; we hadn't really expected to find Diogenes in the ready-made trousers of this machined age. We were amateurs at running down Heraclituses and Democrituses. But amateurs that we were, we had done it. I do not know how to catalogue the potencies of this man. He talked weather wisdom, broke forth into proverbs; he stood up and became the muse of the Indian epics of his own acres and his own sires. His mind was made of stories, and he told them in such a way that you could feel a knife's edge on your skin. He had the gift of hyperbole and could lie like a downright genius. And his narratives were full of the flash of phrases that showed how deep was his knowledge of that animal called man. He knew men to the marrow, and he loved them. He had eaten his peck of the salt of humour; the sharp flavour of New England apples was in his words—"laugh out of the other corner of your mouth; dance

the hornpipe on nothing; wind pudding; break the heart of a grind-stone; thicker than fiddlers in Tophet." Common everyday things, meanness and kindliness, became subjects fit for bronze when he touched upon them. He allowed for the wind in all matters; and the greatest gift he had was the gift of charity.

We discovered before the night was out that Abner Trufant could sing, too. We had always had a warm spot for a man who loved good music. We all made it together. I am afraid the woman upstairs got little sleep that night. We made the welkin reel. Abner knew *The Bay of Biscay*-O, and we taught Abner all the verses in that immortal and unwritten ode of *Ivan Petroffsky*:

"There's a grave where the wave of the blue Danube rolls
And writ there in capitals clear,
Ah, stranger, forget not to shed but a tear
For Abdullah Bul-Bul Emir!"

The Trufant cocks caught us still at our chanting.

We sang the lustier and we laid our hearts the more open to this prince because early in the night he had gone down into his cellar and opened a keg of cider that had an age and a glory upon it. It tasted like sheer vinegar going down; but once there it made all the world June and very many roses indeed. The dew lay thick on everything once we had gotten a quart or so of that Summer

fire inside us. Don't talk of inebriation to me. I hope I know rapture when I see it. I know nectar when I have it in me. That liquor had wisdom and long-winged swallows in it. I thought of more poems to write that night than I have ever thought of in a dozen since. That cider was never bottled this side of the sunnier slopes of Mount Parnassus. In the wee small hours we even wanted to go out with a pitcher of it for Apocalypse. And we would have gone, only Mr. Trufant said it would be wasted on a mere horse.

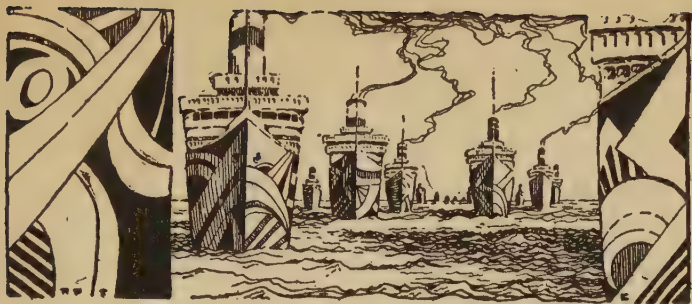
The long and the short of it was that we ended our trip to Arcady right there at Mr. Trufant's kitchen. We had no need of going farther. We were there. And there we stayed the rest of our vacation. Of course, we helped all we could with the chores. But there was little enough to bother about outside in such a March. The cider and Mr. Trufant and the kitchen range were the hub of things for us. Each night was song. Dick almost got our host to writing eclogues before the week was over. Sam played his Hawaiian records on his phonograph and found by that insinuating music the way to Mrs. Trufant's heart. He gave her the whole outfit when she refused to take any money for our upkeep at the end. Dan put on his afternoon clothes the last night of our stay to the farmer's great delight. Mr. Trufant in his turn taught us how to make a Dundee pudding that

would, as he phrased it, "put the whiskers on the bottom of your feet." And Apocalypse crowned it all by putting more flesh on his bones than he had ever planned to have before.

When the golden week was done, we went back to our professors their peers in wisdom. Apocalypse we had shipped home by rail in great state. Though the owner charged us a really exorbitant price for his lost bake-cart, we never murmured. We had gone far in that cart, even to the gates of the City of Wisdom, and we had found goodfellowship there. Who could begrudge any price, however high, that might be set on Pegasus, that goes on wings?

Jeffery Farnol's men, tinkers who are poets and poets who are retired sea-captains, live and move and have their being, after all. They are the Trufants of this world. One does not need to go far to find them. They live on every road. Even amateurs in Arcady can stumble upon them.

FROM WHITEHEAD TO
LE HAVRE



From Whitehead To Le Havre

The regiment that was my personal part of "this man's army" had the most picturesque picnic on its way to the War of any in the A.E.F. I might plan for years and yet never be able to match that trip; and, even if I could follow the itinerary exactly, I should never be able to duplicate the high-handed hilarity, the royal goodfellowship of a thousand men, nor could I people the sea again with so many and goodly ships travelling in company as I had in the Summer of '18 when electricity was in the air and adventure winging on to France.

The weeks before we sailed were like the place Dante visited first. I shouldn't care to repeat that part of the picnic. But, then, all picnics have a bit of hell as a prelude; things *have* to be packed. I have an especially warm feeling when I recall it, for I was adjutant of our battalion. Usually during the War I was adjutant of something; if

it wasn't a fort, it was a trainload of neurotic graduates of the Artillery School at Angers hellbent for port and no ship to take them home. I suppose this was so because I have not the slightest business ability. The army powers-that-be are quick to find out a man's weak points.

At any rate, there I was with the packing of three hundred men to do besides my own. And it was artistic packing, let me tell you. Things had to be stowed in just such a way. We had to crate our G.I. cans like Greek vases, our ranges—cooking, field—like Spring millinery. Our typewriters had to go into boxes unlike any others ever made. Our B.C. telescopes had to be measured for their crates like a man's legs for pants. Everything had to have such and such marks, too, on such and such a side and no other. It was as unthinkable to have the little triangle with the letters A.E.F. in it on the side where the regimental device should be as to have suspender buttons on the cuffs of trousers. I don't know what intellect conceived the intricacies of those markings, but I take my hat off to it. The army certainly knows where to find artists.

It didn't so much matter about our heavy freight, anyway; for that went another way than ours and we never saw any of it again. I guess it is still in the dump at Brest. A friend of mine told me after the War that they had a place there to put just such impedimenta. Again I lift

my hat. Only an artist could work in such strokes of amazing insouciance! We muddled about for a month in France with nothing closer to a B.C. telescope than the colonel's spectacles; but that is part of the game in the sport called war. We missed the medical supplies later when the Spanish flu combed us. But that only gave a sinister touch to the artistic negligence of the powers higher up.

It was the personal baggage each man carried on his back, however, that gave me the worst nightmares. For three weeks we got those men of ours out there on the parade grounds with their packs each nicely unrolled on the ground one step to the front and left; and every day but one we found an extra tent peg over and above the allotted number a man should have, or something just as heinous. It mattered not at all that there was no more idea of having our men use a tent than of having them raise whiskers. It is the whole crux of the game that the unimportant little details make or break the morale of an army. If genius is only an infinite capacity for taking pains, then the army bristles with it. Discipline, in the army, means doing nothing in the most painstaking way possible and without the taint of thought. Think how far Napoleon might have gone if he had made his men carry lawn-mowers in their packs, all nicely disassembled, in the Winter campaign in Rus-

sia! Weren't we ourselves trained for six months to shoot fixed and located guns at a moving target, when all along it was known that we were to use altogether different guns in unknown locations to shoot at fixed targets? And hadn't we been drilled in the infantry manual of arms as the proper prelude to firing 9.2 British howitzers? And horses!—why, we knew all about the use of them, for we had been trained as field artillery, too, of the vintage of the Spanish-American War. I am still looking for the horse that can pull a 9.2 baby that used to sit up on his haunches and bark at the Germans till the earth shook! This is not meant as a slur on the army. Heaven's curse rest upon him who makes a game for boys into an efficient business for mature and sober minds!—like the Steel Trust!

If it wasn't a tent peg, then it was an extra toothbrush. In these days an army travels on its toothbrush. The colonel didn't rage half so much when there was one toothbrush short as when there was one over. That's another secret of the army; it is ten times worse having too many things than having too few. I have filched an extra nickel from the Post Exchange safe just in time to keep my skirts clean when the inspecting general reviewed my accounts. But those three weeks were weeks of my most troubled sleep. It was July, and the heat quivered in livid waves over that parade ground, the colonel

went down the ranks like a red-eyed hawk, and always, save once, one wretched man had too many of something! It took all my grandeur at the sounding-off at retreat and the passing in review to save my skin as an adjutant. But the packing was done, at last, and every mother's son of a defender of democracy had the fear of his Creator in his heart and the right number of tent pegs in his pack when we stood our last inspection on American soil. "From every mountain-side Let freedom ring!"

It was a genius for humour somewhere in the offices of the Department of the Northeast who sent us a command in the midst of our fever of packing to submit at once plans for camouflaging Whitehead. Whitehead!—that great cliff three hundred feet high on which the ganglions of range-finding stations and searchlights nest, which looks over at Spain! There on many a May night I had operated like a motorman the majestic beam of twelve-million candlepower and made tiny fishing sloops at my feet and the toy lighthouses things like pearls. As well try to camouflage Mount Everest!

We left the city of elms and Deering's groves at the quiet hour of eleven o'clock in the morning. The whole departure was the most profound secret. No one knew when we were going except the whole population of Portland. Every man, woman, and child in the city was there to assist in the ceremony, I think. Only the men

in the regiment were taken by surprise. I had a wife, and she was there, everybody's wife was there; men who owned none had a lot of prospective ones to bid them God-speed. Our band played its loudest to draw to the station any who might have missed the secret. We all said good-bye, and our wives gave the last directions about changing our socks at the proper intervals. The last showers of milk chocolate descended on men already groggy with it, and my battalion pushed off on the Grand Trunk Railroad. Ahoy for France and the War to end war!

We all sat down to enjoy the scenery and get the last bars of chocolate under our belts. There was a lot of scenery, too, for it was soon clear that we were in the heart of the White Mountains. There was the notch where my shoes refused to go farther on that college tramping tour two years before. Tiers of pines went up to the clouds; New Hampshire granite set austere brows against the sky. The world was high and sunny. The last chocolates were attended to. But the train drew up at the Crawford Notch House, and hundreds of ladies brought us a fresh supply. They filled our arms with postcards, too. The men scrawled feverish last messages for loved ones back home to the effect that we were now in the White Mountains, that we were having a whale of a time, that we were taking A-number-one care of

ourselves, and that we hadn't seen a German yet. The girls collected the heroes' cards and promised to mail them. Never mind, but the colonel, on a later train, tried furiously to recover those cards, even from Uncle Sam's receptacles of post, and swore he'd court-martial every blanked officer on the blanked first train who allowed these blanked-blanked men thus to betray our whereabouts, which were so profound a secret. We moved on. But we stopped again and again. New showers of milk chocolate descended. The men took to throwing it playfully at the trees we passed. New swarms of postals winged away to the loved ones, who would thus be able to know hourly how their Johns and Toms were speeding to war.

We surged over the Canadian border. The train skirted a lake and obligingly stopped on the shore. There was nothing to it but we should bathe. We did. I think the soldiers in the A.E.F. spent a large part of the time in bathing. Canals, shell-holes, any old pool would do. It kept them all boys until they were home again and had to sell bonds or turn over furrows. Some of us who swam better than the others had to dress on board the train, and one or two may have lost breeches, for the engine started unexpectedly. But breeches are a small sacrifice for a swim.

Two others and myself conceived the brilliant idea

of sitting up on that little cupola on the caboose to see the sights better. We got up there. The sun was setting, and the hills were flakes of amber around us. We sang. Then the engine struck a down grade or the engineer got playful, or something. The hills began to run together like scrambled eggs. Newspapers and other things hurled up by the draught piled themselves over our eyes. Cinders and soot came at us like bullets. We left our fingerprints on the eaves of that cupola when we went around curves. I never imagined there were so many curves on respectable railroad lines before. We were right out straight in the air. We couldn't even think of descending until the train slowed down a bit. Even then we broke out one of the small skylights getting down. When our friends saw us below, they fancied for a moment that the arm of the service that makes its silly boast that negroes have never worn its scarlet had been profaned. Our eyeballs alone were white.

Night descended, and we went down into the St. Lawrence basin. We drew up at Montreal in the wee small hours and detrained. There were only one or two stray loiterers to watch us in the dark from the embankment above, and they left hurriedly when a rifle or so popped off accidentally up through the roof. The colonel was all for court-martial again, but he cooled when the

rifles kept on popping. It wasn't the men's fault; the exigencies of war forced an apology of a rifle upon us.

We had just got nicely lined up when some genius who awaited us there ordered the men to strip for a medical examination. We had just gone through this back at the fort, but never mind. The men were soon in their birthday suits trying to look dignified in the chill of three o'clock in the morning. We formed our battalion in the white innocence of Adam. It was hard for hard-boiled sergeants even to look like men bound for war. One would have thought it was boys out for a swim. My major gave me the minutest directions to have the men pass in file up a particular stairway in the warehouse where the examination was to be. I started up the stairs but was met by a fellow with stars on his shoulders who told me to take the men another way. Stars outvote oak leaves any day; so I did. But on the new stairway I met my major. I won't record the vivid things he found to say. He was always rich in the emphatic words of the language. When I told him please to direct his remarks to the man of stars and not to me, especially before troops, or I would have him jugged, I think I lost his friendship for good. There was a profound coolness between us all the way across the Atlantic. And France did not mend matters.

The inspection over and all of us doubly assured of our physical sufficiency, we filed up the gangplanks to sleep. When we awoke, the pastoral banks of the St. Lawrence were sliding past on both sides. And that rumour that we had been noising about that we were bound for Siberia to smite the sledded Bolsheviks on the ice was quashed. Our band played, and we enjoyed the scenery and played poker. In some ways, we averred, this was about the best war we had seen. In late afternoon we slipped under the tremendous railway bridge over the river above Quebec. Most of us were willing to stake our lightweights that our mast was going to hit midway, but it didn't. At the last minute it bent up like an elastic thing, and we slid under. There was about forty feet to spare, someone said.

Here the river became epic. A wild sunset helped matters out; the Plains of Abraham towered purple against a sky like blood. I thought of Gray's *Elegy* and Wolfe going over this River of Death to win North America for the Anglo-Saxons. A hush came upon us; our first casualty came. One lad, homesick for his far-away Kentucky mountains, leaned over his rifle and discharged it. In the solemn twilight we saw him taken down a ladder to a tug which our wireless had called out. We slackened speed but could not stop. I have never heard what the lad's lot was, life or death—death had been

better. It was all like a shadow that had swept over the world. This was war, after all. But the fireflies that were the windows of the Château Frontenac helped us regain our holiday mood. By the time the stars were out, we were a picnic again.

The rest of our trip down the oldest river in the world is an affair of gigantic and dim memories of wild mountains far away over forlorn waters. Pierre Loti has written of such things. Primeval silences of forests; such names to whisper by night as *Rivière du Loup*; mountains tipped up in mirages that troubled the mind. But on both sides the lost and forsaken shores were slanting away more and more distant into the sea.

A solitary ship we raised Cape Breton on our bow and went into Sydney Harbour to join a company of a dozen great craft of the sea waiting there for us. Our anchors rattled, and we stood by to wait nine days. Through all our sunsets we could see long trains alive with yellow khaki as the troops that were to join us roared in along the basin. As far as we ever knew they were Canadians. There was something gigantic about this game which was now turning into a thing of awe. Nameless thousands of men coming to embark from God knows where, energy tireless and limitless, and the forces that were directing it unseen and mysteriously absent. Things to see everywhere, but no voices giving com-

mands. Time to waste endlessly, careless tarrying. And suddenly in a flash all steam would be up and all bows turned simultaneously towards the mouth of the port.

Sydney will always be a red-letter port for me, for it was there that I for the first time—and I hope the last—embarked in a lifeboat. I, as other officers, had been put in charge of a boat. I had stood beside it as it hung there serene and safe in its davits and heard just what ropes were to be pulled and how I was to have the sixty-odd men allotted to it file past and down the one rope ladder and the two knotted ropes as the boat was going down, and how I was to stop any over that number with my revolver, descend last to the boat, and cut adrift. Such a lark!—as if we'd ever have to do it! But suddenly the English captain of our transport began to illustrate things. "We shall now have some of the boats get off to demonstrate," said he. Like Belshazzar's my face fell. I guess it fell its lowest notch when that captain came up to number five and said, "We'll begin with this one."

We got down all right, and in record time. So the captain, whom later I met socially at chess, assured me. But I hope I never have to ride down the side of one of the major peaks of the Rockies in an eggshell swinging by two threads again! I know why we made good time; we were all so scared that we just poured down those ropes and never noticed the knots where one could take

a breath. I think a good part of us were in our proper seats before we felt the water. No one has been so glad to feel anything since. Our boat had tipped out of the horizontal a healthy angle or two, bow or stern, on the trip down. When we were duly laden on the waves, we parted company with the tackles just as soon as the good Lord would let us. It's all right to swarm into a lifeboat when need is upon you and a hole in the bottom of your ship, when no one is around to see that the wind is blowing up your spine for the good reason that everybody is getting into a lifeboat, too. But it is a different matter to climb into one in cold blood with a regiment looking on!

I knew just how I was to stand in the stern sheets and direct the men at the oars. I stood and directed, but we didn't seem to get on at first. My men were all either from the Kentucky mountains or the back streets of Chicago, and not one of them had ever had an oar in his hands before. My best friend said afterwards that it was amazing how our oars were braided together. The whole regiment was enjoying a first lesson in rowing from the Andes of the decks. But we finally untangled ourselves and moved off. The rest was a lark. We rowed all around Sydney Harbour; we even went up near a transport and joshed the Canadians there until they threw things. Some of the men were for landing and seeing what Cape

Breton girls looked like, but I knew better than allow this. We had a delightful row. It occurred to me at last that there was a lot of tooting from one particular ship. All that noise couldn't be mere applause. We approached it, and it turned out to be our own H.M.S. *Sakada*. The captain had been blowing the whistle an hour for us with personal emphasis. All the other boats that had followed us and taken the waves were long home. We lost no time but came alongside and hooked on.

The descent to Avernus is easy, as Virgil once said; it's the getting back that's the rub. No sooner were we attached than some wretched bilge hole far up in the clouds began to shower unclean water upon us. I shouted aloft to have the thing throttled, but to no avail. I held up my hand to fend off the deluge. The emergency rations of biscuit, the rockets, and everything else was awash. What angered me most was that my bunk-mate's head was protruding from a porthole away above me, and he was laughing until the tears ran down his cheeks. We came up those ropes like drowned rats. We were greeted with cheers by the men of the regiment. The captain, however, though he had words to say, did not applaud. . . .

One fine day, when we had gotten to thinking this idling in the harbour was to be perpetual, our anchor came up with a jerk, we swung about and nosed towards

the sea. We looked around, and every ship was with us. In an hour the last land lay like a haze in our wake. It shimmered, and we were alone with our mates in a landless world. *Bon voyage*, North America! We could look about and examine the crew of our craft.

We could see how hard hit England was by the War. The under-officers of the *Sakada* were boys with the bloom still on their cheeks; they should have been at their cricket and "rugger." Here they were in gold braid bending their crescent manhood against the gales, swaggering like veterans with the lives of men who shaved every day in their hands. We felt like old men. But it was the underlings who fascinated us. Our ship was on its second trip on the Atlantic; it was an Indian Ocean liner. So much the lattice work at the tops of all cabins and the electric fans declared. The crew, however, gave the surest evidence. The Americans, quick always at nicknames, dubbed them at once monkey men. They were hill-men from the back lots of India. They were brown, dwarfish men, naked save for cotton drawers. Their big-toes stood out from their feet like thumbs. Those feet of theirs were another pair of hands. It was like watching monkeys in the trees to see them rigging the ropes for the lifeboats far down on the perpendicular sides of the speeding boat. They chattered a language like the parrot's, like water glasses being rubbed together. Their lives

aboard were brief as the mayflies', so a stripling in navy blue assured me; colds took them off after a little.

Two of these mites that walked like men the artillerymen adopted at once and took to their bosoms. These were the only pets in sight, *que voulez-vous?* They were called Raspberry and Blackberry from their respective hues. They were as completely Americanized before we were through as ship's discipline would permit; they even mastered some cuss words. But the crowning step in their naturalization was the boxing match. As the star bout of a ring-side afternoon the boys had Raspberry and Blackberry put on the gloves. A collection was showered down upon the hatchway from the tiers of men around the ring, pennies mostly, because they liked pennies better than silver and money to them meant most in bulk. They shook hands, and then they gave us our money's worth. Their gloves served mainly for hobbles merely in a game of mayhem. I have never seen such blows—arms crooked about the neck, elbow stabs, butting of heads. At a crucial moment Blackberry, finding he made no dents in Raspberry with his insulated hands, lifted his foot and gave the flat of it fair on his foe's face. We thought a neck had been broken. But no, Raspberry finally found his way into the ring again, and such havoc he wrought with his cased clutches on Blackberry's eyes

and throat that the men had to interfere and call it a draw just on the sunny side of manslaughter.

After a day or two of sun we met the Gulf Stream and fogs. Then we were treated to a storm that put our mountaineers on their backs as pale as their "undies." Misery such as can reign only on the sea settled upon us. Raspberry was sick in the crow's nest, and the consternation below was great, for the wind confused laws of gravitation. But at mid-ocean the sun came through the wrack, the mountains of brine around us ran silver, and our men tottered up to look for whales. Behold, our dozen ships had grown to twenty under cover of the storm. Other transports from Halifax and New York had fallen in beside us.

The lone American destroyer that had escorted us circled once around us all and turned back to the Land of the Free. We were alone in our glory, twenty Leviathans of us in company. I shall never see such a sight again while I live. Ships magnificent in size, ring-streaked and barber-poled with camouflage, ships the halves of which disappeared in certain lights, fantastic creatures out of Eastern stories. Great floating wills all aimed at a common goal. Power and silence, they moved majestically along saying nothing. They were so substantial, they kept pace so equably, it was hard to think they

moved; one had to look down into the hissing furrows alongside to believe it. For hours they would plough on a certain tack; then, instantly, they would turn as one upon a new. Our nights were nights of sealed portholes and no light even of a cigarette on any decks, nights sightless and silent; yet in the morning there we all were, each ship at the same interval as at the setting of the sun. I wager the old Greeks would have thrilled to see such beauty and such godly power wielded by men. It was the finest poem I have ever known. Not then perhaps, but afterwards, one felt the whole solemn thing one had been a part of.

There came an evening near the end of the sea when the calmness snapped. An electric uncertainty ran through the flotilla. As night came on, our engines slowed down and acted queerly. One thought of the darker, secret ships that moved under the waves. We had reached the edge of battle; we were within reach of enormous blows. At dawn we saw around us on every side small, thin and nervous craft that could bury themselves to their raking stacks with the speed of angels of light. They were here now, and then they were off over the horizon leaving wakes like sudden cracks along the ice of great lakes. The British destroyers had picked us up. The phantoms of the night melted a thousand miles away. The destroyers came up so close that we could

see their bottoms to the keel when they heeled over in the waves. They seemed midgets almost too small to hold men; life in them must have been out of the horizontal perpetually, an existence of angles. Theirs was a breed born of the needs of the War, too shallow below the water to be torpedoed, swift with the swiftness of the hawk, brooding the new and deadly eggs that had spread terror among those terrors of the sea, the submarines.

That evening the largest rainbow I have ever seen opened a triple arch like a door before us. Our tallest mast tipped its upper edge. The rainbow was repeated in an ocean that had grown smooth. The door of adventure was ajar; we were sailing in. I think even the colonel felt like a poet that evening.

The colonel had not taken the trip too easily. It was hard to impress on the men that the life-preservers they wore at supper were not neckwear for a minstrel show but grave things to be worn like coats with decorum. For another thing, he had met his match at chess. A second lieutenant of ordnance had beaten the breeches off him at the game of queens and kings. It got on his nerves. One night, when the "shave-tail" had checkmated him unusually early, the colonel turned in wrath upon my best friend, a lieutenant and master of the more modern rhythms of the piano, who happened to be playing *The Little Lump of Sugar Down in Dixie Land*, and de-

clared that he might be able to play decently if it weren't for the everlasting racket. My friend rose in silence and left; we all followed. After that the colonel had the main saloon to himself and his chess the rest of the voyage. I don't think even that improved his game.

The morning after the rainbow we went on deck to see blue downs on our port. I thought we were for Plymouth. But we were not. Our boat, though some of the others fell out, sailed bold as brass right up the whole length of the English Channel in broad daylight. One could tell that the day of the submarine was done! Aeroplanes swam overhead and blimps towed by destroyers that veered and turned at most intriguing and sudden angles. The sea turned incredible emerald and turquoise and silver. Chalk cliffs lifted their heads to port. We strained our eyes to starboard; and at last we saw the white sisters of the land that shone in our dreams. France! And suddenly, far away and like distant thunder, we heard the War at last, the low grumble of mammoth guns hammering the Germans in Flanders. The Hindenburg Line was falling into ruins, fading into history to join the Old Guard of Waterloo. Wait! we were coming, too—leave us something to shoot at! It was a moment to remember all one's life. Then the gateway in the bridge of boats which held up the submarine net thrown across the Straits of Dover was opened, and we

went out into the North Sea and turned up for the Thames. It wasn't enough that we had sailed the St. Lawrence and the Channel; we were going up the Thames to London!

There was a farewell dinner tendered us by our British hosts of shipboard that night. I won't dwell on that occasion in these Volsteadian days. I shall simply put it that they did us very proud. Next day we threaded our way between checkerboards of fields. A training ship blossomed out with little orphan boys in navy blue to its smallest and highest spar; they filled the air with cheers. We put in at the Royal Albert Docks with Tower Bridge and Paul's dome lifting above the forests of London. More cheers.

The picnic was upon us again. We changed boat for train. New showers of blessing descended, only this time it was pork pies or something English, instead of milk chocolate. The men bristled at the term of endearment the British public had chosen for them. Sammies indeed!—"How do you get that way?"—But they all liked the English girls' complexions. They wanted to see them closer. As usual I had adjutanting to do. I had one whole side of our train to patrol to keep the boys from seeing if the complexions were good enough to eat. They thought the English train with its coach compartments was a joke being played upon them—"Who's going to push

these wheelbarrows?—How many of us to a net?”—They got playful with the doors; some of the men fell out. But if my side had mishaps, the other did not. For Red Mac was there. Red Mac whose name is at least as great as Achilles’ among men of the Coast Artillery Corps. He had a way with men and things. He was a lieutenant-colonel when he should have been a brigadier-general; for once as a lieutenant he had lost two files for kicking the colonel’s dog all over the parade grounds because it had used his leg as a latrine at the most solemn moment of retreat. It was he who made all the men in a fort I know do their drills at double time for two weeks until their tongues used to hang out like dogs’ at the sunset gun. He also threw a plate once, rumour had it, at a lieutenant who forgot himself and started eating before him at mess. Not a man descended on Red Mac’s side of the train that day.

At last some merciful mortal started the train. We rolled through the backyards of London; we consorted with miles of wash. More cheers and awful bundles of hay masquerading as cigarettes were thrown to us. We got into the country of the Twenty-third Psalm at last; and there night overtook us. The midnight moon riding high and full saw us detrain at Alfred’s old capital. We marched through jetty, winding streets on cobblestones with gables running silver in the moonlight above. Up

hills, and Camp Winall Down at last and the smell of turnips.

Two days we rested at Winchester. Knowing the place, I took the whole gang with the band thrown in to give us a tune down to see the college and the cathedral of the longest nave. We got the squads all backside to and upside down because we had to pass to the left and the guide had to be right, therefore, instead of left. Or something like that; I grow rusty in my military palaver. But squads are small things to cathedrals. The men weren't much taken with my harangue on English school-boy life or the arches of the cathedral. But they fell in love with the bones. They thought that Queen Emma must be awfully put out to have hers all mixed up with King Canute's. And they thought the coffins of the kings were tidy little boxes to keep dry in. We played the band in the close and frightened away the verger who had been bothering us.

Up in camp our "he-men" took the English call to tea as an insult; but they laughed out of the other corner of their mouths when they found they had missed the only supper they were to get. As I remember the food at Winall Down it was mostly cabbage with inferior cabbage for dessert. England's belt was drawn tight that Summer, and she was more to be pitied than chided; and we always had our "corned Willy" in reserve. One

thing the men resented most was that we all had to hand our rifles and revolvers over to the British to be returned on our leaving England. It is an old law that no foreigner can bear arms on British soil. I have the laugh on the law, though, for before I was an American artilleryman I carried a rifle in the O.T.C. at Oxford.

We moved to Southampton and the Channel again. One company of us will always remember that jump since they did it on shanks' mare. When we embarked, what boat should it be to ferry us over but that famous tub, the *Yale* of the Fall River Line, playing the Cavalier over here in wartime waters. We spent the night of crossing in song with the English officers returning to the Front coming in on the few lines they knew.

Le Havre opened her arms in the morning. One crane-ful of our army trunks spilled overboard, and we speculated on who would be wearing this week's B.V.D.'s next moon. Just as we formed on the pier, the War that had been mostly far away came right up beside us and stopped. A trainload of wounded British with the mud and the blood still upon them arrived. Of a sudden the picnic seemed at an end. *Lusisti satis*. . . . The boys turned into men. All faces were grave as we unrolled the regimental colours and started up the winding streets of Havre. The small boys in black pinafores who ran laughing beside us and begged for "souvenirs, one pen-ny!" did not get

an answering smile; we weren't of their kind for the moment. Not even our first French sailors who walked the streets in sissified hats with red pompons too good to be true could make us smile. As we marched along some of us felt that the land underfoot was almost a holy ground; Havre was Acre, and we ourselves the newest arrivals of the New Crusade.

SAINT-POL IN THE SUN





Saint-Pol in the Sun

I never can think of Saint-Pol without thinking of the sun. Sometimes it is the sunshine of sultry mid-afternoon in August when all good Saint-Polians are drowsing behind their shutters and the houses all stand white as the New Jerusalem. Or it may be the sunshine of early morning, very slanting and full of larks, with the deep valleys that moat the village round turning lighter and lighter azure as the eye goes down until one seems to be looking into a land more ethereal than earth, bluer, and nearer the morning stars. But always the village has the sunlight upon it. Far away, down the hills and somewhere beyond Limoges, begins the France where clouds are forever brushing on the poplar trees, dragging the fields like long gray nets, and sweeping the blackbirds by myriads before them. But here were hills that stood

like amber and drank in the sun; roads that high two-wheeled carts churned to gilt, a land steeped in gold.

Perhaps the village got more than its share of the light of the South because it balanced itself, like all villages of the South of France, upon the peak of the highest hill it could find. For defence the old Saxons chose the valleys; but the Franks were for the hills. And the railway has come as near Saint-Pol as it ever will. Trains can cross rivers; but hills that stand straight up keep their ancient peace. From almost any window one has a valley full of green farms embroidered with silver ribbons of roads at his feet. It is restful to see so much of the world and yet to be so far above it. At night one feels a next-door neighbour of the stars. The *ciel bleu* of *poilus en permission* seemed beautifully at home up here against the sky.

If it is the noises that I remember, then Saint-Pol to me is the everlasting sound of children's feet. Day-long the place was eloquent with the click-clack of sabots on cobblestones. The mayor's son alone went shod in leather. And he was not the "coming" lad like the others. He had been to far-off Paris even, but he had not found the grace his playmates had who stayed at home and walked on their native wood. The boys whose shoes poverty had bitten into most made the most music of all with their patches of tin.

The hour supreme of wooden music was the hour of retreat. Our regiment had a band that played the Pied Piper to the young of Saint-Pol. A band was a thing they had dreamed of, only, before we came. At the first boom of the drum, each quiet alley turned into a torrent of children, boys in black smock skirts dragging by the hand very little boys with saucers for eyes, girls with needles and pins in their mouths and knights and ladies forlorn in their eyes—"La musique! la musique!" And the sound of their feet drummed out our drums. They followed us all the way, dodging between our legs and throwing whole platoons out of plumb, wanting all of them the impossible yet burning glory of matching steps with the bandsmen. I myself have tried gravely to present my batallion to the major knee-deep in children; and he, smiling, returned my salute like a venerable Santa Claus standing in cohorts of girls and boys. If anything ever brought home to me the truth of the New England adage that men are only boys grown tall, it was our retreats. I think we all, old and young, standing there on the brink of the War through those few golden sunsets, turned boys again. At any rate, I had never lifted my toes so high before or felt the fever of brass burning so at my spine, not even when our regiment unfurled its colours for the first time and went up the hills of Havre. It is a wonder we did not break and go it whooping

pell-mell for the parade ground with the rest of the boys.

Pigs play a portentous part in any recollection of Saint-Pol. Every alley had its legions; it was a poor family that could not muster two. By regimental decree a dead zone for swine was declared around each company mess hall. The pigs resident therein were purchased outright by the regiment and eaten, or their owners were bribed to give them the benefit of a vacation in the country. Board was even paid on rusticated pigs. No company was more zealous in hunting the pigs from its environs than my own. Our captain spent all our funds and a week of his time. Yet more were always turning up. I am sorry to set down that sometimes the same pigs that we had financed into the rural districts reappeared to be bargained for all over again. Some families, too, were so attached to their animals that only a delicate interview by the town mayor himself would separate them from the objects of their affections. The animals had held so long the ground floor that they had become as cornerstones of the whole fabric. One has to live many years in Europe, where animals are more nearly members of the family, to understand our dilemma.

But one memorable evening our captain sat down at table with peace on his brow and a smile on his lips. The last obstinate porkers had been dislodged. He was like a Roman going to a triumph. He gazed benevolently

through the screened door upon the Grand Hotel of the Universe across the way. Hotels in France run that way; the smaller the town, the larger the name. In Orléans, now, it would be the Hotel of Paris; in Caen, the Hotel of France; in Nevers, the Hotel of Europe; but in Saint-Pol it is the Grand Hotel of the Universe. And then, just as the captain raised his first forkful of camouflaged "corned Willy," the great swinging doors of the Hotel of the Universe opened majestically, and out came a whole drove of pigs. . . . As Hans Andersen has it in his tale of Waldamar Daa—"Hush, rush away!"

There were pleasanter appurtenances to our lodging places, though, than pigs. There were the lovable, excitable, and strange children of another and older civilization than ours. One found there men with webs of wisdom at the corners of their eyes, men whose feet had carried them far along the white ways to the cities of human sympathy, without ever taking them from home, whom the years had befriended with kindness and white hairs. And these men, too old now for the wars, were a little perplexed and grieved to see that Americans did not carry tomahawks and scalp one another, after all. There were the women, too, boiling over with longing to play the mother hen to all these queer transatlantic chickens, and not knowing in the least how to do it. I shall not soon forget the horror on the face of my land-

lady in the *Rue des Étoiles* when she found my windows wide open and with the air pouring in—the windows she had locked and curtained and shuttered against the devils of the night air. Nor shall I forget the thanksgiving welling in her eyes when, unscathed and whole, I emerged from the chrysalis of bed curtains which she had also drawn and secured. Little, faded, carrot-haired lady of the *Rue des Étoiles*!—I will be smelling her savoury pottages made of bread and cabbage and not much else save faith to the last of my mornings, I am thinking. And with the smell of soup I shall see again all her frantic and wistful attempts to take me into the place her soldier son had left vacant forever, to take me to her hearth and her heart.

I hope, however, I shall never have to go through another such a night of fever and frenzy as that when I tried to explain in a preparatory-school French to a streetful of women weeping and laughing by turns the reason why Madame the Modiste Busson had not been assigned a lieutenant to care for, after all, and she with the soup all on the table and the bed all made up! The women would now crowd around Madame the Modiste to hug her in pity, and now elbow about me to urge me to attempt a recapture of the lost lieutenant. Everyone talked at once. It was like a poultry yard at laying time. I snatched at the sole means of salvation.

Rushing forth into the market place, I seized upon the first lieutenant I met and dragged him to the empty nest. The street behind us as we returned was welled from wall to wall with the crowd in a jubilee. I think they burst forth into singing. And Madame Busson sat down on her steps and wept.

Besides my landlady there was in my house ten-year-old Minette, with hair like honey spilled over a wall. I got on with her best of all with my French that was quite innocent of irregular verbs. Nine times out of ten she could tell what I was trying to say before I said it; and the tenth she guessed what she pleased. She taught me all the words of *Madalon*, that march which has the *poilus* themselves in it, long bayonets and all, *képis*, canteens, and fire through laughter. While she taught me the words her white fingers were twisting me up from her mother's bright yarns the most splendid Ninette and Rintintin to wear about the neck to keep the bad German bullets away. Her eyes were such wellsprings of wonder that I am afraid she had her own way with my New England; heaven forgive me, if she ever comes over here and finds no moose on our lawns or catamounts in the Main Street elms.

My lines had fallen in the pleasantest of places in the *Rue des Étoiles*. Not only was there the benediction of a perfect landlady at the end of my day's drilling, but

also an iron candlestick twisted into a Mediæval griffin to carry up three flights of cobwebby stairs that climbed through the shadows up very close to the great dewy stars flowering the velvet of the southern sky. Those stairs climbed to the gates of sleep and such dreams as one had only dreamt of before. Of course, it may have been my long hours spent in the sun; but I shall always believe it was the hangings of my bed which brought the sleep that came upon me, swift, silent, a great bird of beauty, and all the west winds in the hollow of its wings. To be sure, there was the angel down in the Old World featherbed over my limbs, and who could fail to sleep under angel down? But the motif of my dreaming was the golden lilies that meandered over the canopy and down the curtains. Exotic, secretive, returning upon themselves; they wound themselves into my mind until sleep's unicorns and shy, thin birds looked out at me with bright eyes. So rare and regal hangings must surely have come down from the ruined castle nearby where, as my landlady told me, the aristocrats faced the cannon of the Revolution across the spilled wine and the overset tables of the grand salon.

Although my other appointments were poor and spare enough, my little casements opened upon treasures unspeakable. All Saint-Pol huddled beneath me, red tiles and gardens, lime trees and cobbles, and the great tower

of the church raising the whole mass of the village towards God. The roofs ran radiant with the early sunshine that has the dew in it; between ran the cool canyons of crooked streets. And here passed each morning with the rising sun the small withered lady with a curlew's voice who bought rabbit skins from door to door and who cried for her skins in a voice that soared to the ultimate trebles of pity. Poor woman!—the unfeeling American artillerymen soon ruined her early business, once they had learned a little French, for they took up her cry and made the village reel with their pleadings for the skins of rabbits. She could not make herself heard over the din, and so she was obliged to beat a retreat.

From my windows I could look down into the intimacies of village life which one did not see from the high-walled streets. There among the cabbages and artichokes which every house however tiny must possess, in those gardens built up many feet above the level of the street by centuries of cultivation, were comedies and tragedies unending. I know now how land and its green, growing things can become holy. Those little plots of black earth, about which the houses spread their arms in the old Roman manner, were the hearts of the homes and the shrines of the household *Lares* and *Penates*. The small land gods keep forever green. Each inch of the gardens must have been watered with the tears and

warmed by the laughter of ages of ancestors. No wonder a garden is an altar, when one keeps it as the best room of the house. All that the parlour is to the New Englander, the garden is to the man of France; only the Frenchman makes his place holy not only by dying but by living in it. Here the miracle of bread from the green blade is wrought; here God acts the baker by the very bedside and fireside of His children. So I came to know the fierce combat of love that goes on each morning between one Saint-Polian and his wife to see who shall be the first to water the potatoes in a garden no bigger than a pansy bed. I have seen a bronzed man, wearer of the *Croix* from the bitter days of '70, shed tears of chagrin over finding his wife before him with the watering pot. And the tears were not the less hot for being turned a moment later into laughter.

Though I slept up beside the stars in the informal Street of Stars and ate there now and then, modestly and sparingly by design, to please my landlady and praise her cookery, I messed regularly at the severely formal Sign of the Old Ring-Doves. The restaurant was quite continental and Parisian in its exterior; there were clipped trees before that could have stood in tubs, a swept sidewalk, chairs and tables set out on the street. One could take in the open air the everlasting *chocolat chaud* or *limonade* under the coldly critical eye of one's own regi-

mental M. P., who had been ordered to arrest anybody drinking anything stronger than these within the prohibited hours and who would be only too delighted to make an arrest among the commissioned. Within the formality continued. There were tables for dominoes for the bearded and a billiards room for the beardless; each last chair the sacred property of some patron of many years; more tables for eating omelettes and talking over wines, platoons of polished bottles full of last year's sunlight and captured stars; a polish on everything like a veneer.

But in the upper chamber where we ate and in the persons of the widowed proprietress and her daughter Mat was the greatest informality imaginable. Mat always sang love songs when handling the endless parade of plates that must mark any French meal, though it be but an omelette. And she ran up and down the stairs to the great damage of the dishes like the wild gazelle that she was. She had a laugh for every course and a gay word for every officer; she was like a fountain all over the place. But her mother's informality was of a different sort. Here again was water, but it was the bitter waters of Marah. The good woman never let a meal pass without repeating her grief to us and all the intimate details of her widowing. I never could understand it all perfectly, even after the hundredth repetition, for she talked the

faster and higher and more chokingly as she worked to her climax. But it seems that an American major, sent hither as the herald of our coming, had wrought all her woe. It is a way majors have. He and her husband had sat late at the drinking, in this very chamber. And so prodigious had the major's thirst been and so courteous the deportment of her spouse, who could of course not refuse to match the major drink for drink, that her poor husband had become hopelessly befuddled. He had forgotten the very contours of his own house, had stepped straight out of the room upon the treacherous stairs which began their descent flush with the lintel and with an abrupt turn and pitch into an unlit shaft; and he had fallen and broken his neck at the bottom. At this point, she always broke down and cried on the one nearest her. No meal ever passed the dessert without being watered with her tears. She blamed the American for everything.

But I blame the stairs. For I came within one of duplicating her husband's departure. Weary one night with censoring a mountain of letters written by Kentucky mountaineers whose only schooling had been gotten between times and who were bubbling over with excitement at this new and strange land that led them into volumes of literary effort, I left the room with my pile of correspondence. And I clean forgot the treacherous

step-down, plunged headlong, burst open the door below, and emerged in a cataract of letters before the very feet of madame. With one wild scream she dropped and smashed the bottle she was pouring—and for this she lamented most afterwards, until I paid her for it—and rushed out into the night. It was some time before she could be persuaded that it was not the ghost of her husband she had seen and could be prevailed upon to return. Thereafter her tale of woe took a fresh impetus, and her tears flowed the more dramatically. And now her tears were launched upon me in particular.

Not the least informal of things at the Old Ring-Doves was madame's musical clock. I do not think the brain of man has ever contrived before or since such a marvel of continuous sound. On the hour, it played a lugubrious song, like *Alice, Ben Bolt*, only sadder; on the half, it whistled like a canary; at the quarter, it became a nightingale; and I think it even peeped at the five-minute mark. It was a torture. It grew on one. It affected the appetite. I hope I am not unkind, but I am beginning now to read a sinister and purposeful economy on madame's part in that clock. But its singing days were numbered. One noon, one of us who knew something of wheels was delegated to suppress it; and he did his work so thoroughly that it never peeped again. It never told the time again, either. But madame had her revenge, for

even after we had paid her for the clock, she would weep over her newest loss. It appeared, too, that her husband had loved it as nothing else on this earth.

One other house I came to know most intimately. It was the town château, long since vacated by its owners, that fell to the lot of my friend, the lieutenant who had had an eye to art rather than comfort and the study of human nature when he chose his lodgings. Below, as all big French houses usually are, it was merely a grandiloquent stable. But above the odour of bygone horses the house became royal. The ceilings burst forth into fields of the fleur-de-lys, there were period chairs to sit in, lambrequins heavy with the dust stirred up by the minuet dancers long since dust themselves; great mirrors in gilt gave fascinating vistas into dim and mysterious sunless lands between the sunlit lands through the window panes; there was a spinet with notes as thin as moonbeams; a fireplace of marble on which cherubs played at ninepins with coats-of-arms. The beds put mine to shame even in their canopies. They were so high that one had to climb into them by a carven mahogany stepladder. We spent hours by taper light exploring chests for ornaments for the mantels. Two duelling pistols inlaid with Spanish silver we snapped at one another across the table, to make the thrilling discovery later that they were loaded with rusty charges of powder and ball. It made the world

shrink to come upon daguerreotypes of men and women who looked for all the world like the wistful, patient people we knew at home in our own haircloth attic trunks; the same women's curls, the same generous and manly moustaches heavy and drooping like garlands of Yuletide. The identical "Sunday-go-to-meeting" expressions. Dust and cobwebs, the eternal and final resting places of our best clothes and our pride. Even our War, which had brought my friend and me into this house of faded splendour, was nothing new; in one cupboard, among other things, we found a yellowed newspaper of half a century ago announcing the entry of the Prussians into Paris. The world moves on; but old houses remain, and young men find themselves at home in unexpected places with their fathers.

One of the show places of Saint-Pol was the baths. All that our small towns lavish upon the post-office in the way of a civic Hellenism Saint-Pol had lavished upon this building. It was pride, in marble and Greek columns. Not that the people spent much time there; but there it was, and a sight good to close any vista, a good background for any conversation or undertaking. But we Americans patronized it. We stood in droves before the indifferent eye of its lordly "manager" as he played upon us with his hose. It was a ritual almost, the gaining of this final stage of actual contact with water. There was one

stage of the process, a ticklish one for transatlanteans where a part of one's apparel was left in the hands of a woman attendant. One passed through so many hands and surrendered so many different articles of wear in various places that an afternoon was needed to accomplish the deed. Again we were running into the Romans, who made a festival of their bathing with their stages of progress—their *frigidarium*, *tepidarium*, *calidarium*, and the rest. But there was this difference: the Saint-Pol baths were exclusively frigid.

The heart of Saint-Pol beat in its central square at the church. Not in the religious observances, though, but in the fairs. The best things there were still under the wings of Holy Church; and these were the best. I never counted the fairs, but no week passed without two or three it seemed. Nor did I ever see the mountains of fruit and pumpkins and armies of cattle which we associate with ours. But no French peasant needs any elaborate excuse for putting on his best bib and tucker, for getting among friends to smoke and drink, for turning boy again. Let a French hen lay but a single egg, and—*voilà!*—there is your excuse, your fair! And so he seizes upon the egg or the hen herself or the cow, from any one of which he may no more dream of parting than of flying to the moon, and he is off to the village, to talk and drink the day to the dregs of the sunset; and home he goes under

the coming of the stars with his precious pig or cow still at his side, and lays him down and has peace.

Of course, sometimes things do get bartered or sold. But it is usually an afterthought, and it is often with regret. There was the plaque of Verdun. . . . A dealer in sculptures had it. It was the apple of his eye, as it became the apple of mine once I saw it. He did his best to discourage me from buying it; tried vainly to interest me in other of his pieces. Here was an angel full sail with the wind, or the Joan of Arc horse and all. But nothing else would do. I *would* have it for its spirited *poilus* at full charge with the cock of the Republic flying over them. So at last, tearfully almost, he started to wrap it for me; held it lovingly for the last time; his fingers trembled over the relief. A violent tremor seized him. He dropped it. . . . The hundred fragments lay at his feet, and on his face were the seven woes. I stole away and left him, feeling like the murderer of his child. It did not matter in the least that I paid him for it.

Certainly there were other fairings less precious than the plaque of Verdun. The most numerous family was the combs. There were combs for every bump of woman's cranium. They were set with flashy glass; they were mounted on dingy cards, cheap merchandise of Parisian make designed like all such articles the world around for sale in the sunshine; fairy gold, not to be

looked at out of their proper setting, fading outside the moonshine of fairs. But I never saw a single one of these combs for consumption in the provinces being sold, nor was there much evidence of combs in the hair of the women who frequented the market. Quite as cheap and tawdry were the articles of local manufacture, which someone described as one of the atrocities of the War, the souvenir handkerchiefs. Clapsed hands, tricolour and Old Glory intertwined—the heraldry of alliance was soon exhausted. So fair and fine ideals were never so primitively and crudely expressed. And over these bits of battling colours and raw designs the loving fingers of many loyal women worked themselves to the bone. These sold. I doubt if there be a doughboy or other man of the A.E.F. who is not able to dig out of his old letters some of these pathetic mementoes whose art is cruder than the cave drawings of Altamira and whose idea is as delicate as the sleeves woven by other women and worn by the blue-and-golden men of chivalry, as close to tears. In spite of the sneers of the sophisticated, in spite of the aftermath of a peace made by tinkers and plumbers, the expedition of 1918 was not without some trace of the beauty of a belated crusade.

Much that was best in the stuffs of the fairs came into Saint-Pol from the sun-drenched hills and the azure and deep valleys of the country roundabout. Men with the

fine flowering of the rose of wind and weather on their cheeks, men square as the French idea for a house, men with the build and the patient gentleness of their oxen; all in smocks of best sateen that could not gloss over their grace of sinew and ~~thence~~ these men salt with the savour of the earth and full of the laughter of trees, lovers of the loam their fathers slept in, worshippers in the cathedral of God's out-of-doors, came in to make the fairs. The most of them were old, of course, for the War of the century was on; but they were not the less a glory to look upon. And the War had made their women the more magnificent. Able always to do a man's work, they now did two. It was they who brought in the pigs and the sheep and the old grace of the hills. They were not all comely of feature or limb; but they had wings of patience and faith on their shoulders. Hard work had shaped them until they were like old pitchers that grow into families; each nick is another flake in the aureole.

Of all the women who plodded fairwards none was so much a daughter of the elements as the lady of the pigs. She came down out of the high glens with her lean brown charges clad in an apron of hemp and a knitted skirt of a wistful blue. How her bony bare legs managed the galleons of sabots no one could say; she never seemed to give them a thought; they bit off an even two feet of dusty path, *klip-klop, klip-klop*, over the hills, over

hollows, imperturbable and tireless like fate. Her bare arms of chestnut brown swung like flails with the lurch of her body. Her wide eyes were always far ahead on the tops of all the hills. On before her streamed her drove like none other with their hungry eyes and shaggy hair. Her pigs were everywhere; their noses crimped up the soil of all the byways, their feet furrowed up all manner of lanes. Yet when they had strayed their farthest, even into all the gardens of Saint-Pol, their mistress would give her call, and back they would all come with their seesaw trot. That call I came to know above all the queer noises of the fairs. She did not make it on her lips but deep down in her throat. Those four notes were like the wind under the broken shingles of an abandoned house, like the language of the Zulus. My friend the South African Boer at Oxford once spoke Zulu to me; he had learned it from his dusky nurse. It is a haunting thing.

Beyond Saint-Pol on all sides lay the sunshine and fresh delight. One could not wait for the days of fair to bring it in. Luscious blackberries hung everywhere, which the French peasants swore were poisonous; they shuddered to see us gather and eat them; they followed us to see our bodies fall. Because their fathers out of mind had not risked tasting them, the sons forbore. But I marched my whole company out each evening to fill up their mess tins, and we had such pies as kings are fed on. There were

the women who gleaned the barley fields, too; bent crones, centuries old, withered as crabapples of last year; whose left hips were higher than the right with their perpetual stooping to pick up the stray straws left by the mowers; Millet's folk, whose poor hands of twice human size were crisscrossed with tens of thousand cuts from that last sharp blade that ties up their little bundles of thrift. Once I improvised a rake of light pattern and showed them how to gather their gleanings upright. Their blue old eyes swam with admiration. But next day they were bending at their work with their ancestors again. We found old men, too, who threw up their furrows with left-handed ploughshares; creatures of toil everlasting that brought tears to one's eyes. Yet, somehow, thinking now of those people, I seem to see them blessed, and the sweat and the drudgery have turned holy things. Such toil can become a very sacrament.

Winding roads by which one could doze with the creak of wains and the cry of far sheep in one's dreams led down to a smaller village than Saint-Pol even, a cluster of houses by a stream. A ruined millwheel turned the hours into nightingales. Here all through the afternoon came the musical *pat-pat* of the women who knelt in boxes of straw and pounded their wash with paddles at the river's edge. Sometimes, too, they sang together and their shoulders swayed in time, an air as old as the morn-

ing of Creation, perhaps, when the morning stars sang above the great Creator kneeling by the first river of the world. Above them across the valley towered an aqueduct of the Roman builders and a bridge some Mediæval mystic must have fashioned, for it went up high in its middle for the sheer ecstasy of soaring, for the beauty of having cool, green arches through which the swallows sweep.

The crowning beauty of the bridge was Anthoine. All my twilights he stood there by my side, a slender little boy with eyes full of the evening and the swallows and the stars that were coming out on the arches of the hills. He told me of common things—his brothers, his mother, the carp he hoped some day to catch. Yet now I know he was telling me another *Book of Psalms*, the psalms of happiness that are so hard to find after boyhood has gone its way. The old bridge and the new stars and the water that sounded far below, the purple smoke of cottage chimneys standing straight up like prayers into the evening, the last dusky swallows; Anthoine is the little shepherd of them all now, and his eyes that grew brighter with the starlight are come to be the symbols to me of that sunlit place where men and women and children lived so simply and so well. The châteaux and the Romes of this earth fall to dust; but the Anthoines

and the ladies of the pigs, the men with wind and sun in their brown bodies, the women of cornflower eyes whose hands are scarred with the harvest—these abide beyond the memory of our wars, beyond the ruin of our pride.

THE BOOK OF TENANTS



The Book of Tenants

It is a convenient way of settling the old dispute as to the relative importance of Oxford and Cambridge, as I have found by experience, to point out that Geoffrey Chaucer, who knew the best wines, wives, and stories of his time, mentions only two Cambridge men to three Oxonians. And the Cantabrigians were only North Country boors whose combined intellectual resources were needed to outwit a mere miller of Trumpington; nor was there any artistry in their triumph. But Chaucer's Oxonians were princes in their way. There was the lean scholar who went in for Aristotle, silence, plain clothes, and moral tales such as that of Grisilde; there was that other quite different clerk whose sweet breath was spent on *Angelus ad virginem* and winning words that won his landlord's wife; and, last of all, the most intriguing of the trio, Jankin, the Wife of Bath's

fifth husband. It was Jankin who had the *Book of Wicked Wives*. He read it to his spouse, and richly she deserved to hear it, being of an amorous tooth and inclined to love by the stars she was born under. But it is not my purpose to retell her story, how she lost her patience, how the *Book of Wives* lost three leaves, Jankin his temper, and eventually the control of his wife when she made the most of the blow he gave her.

I merely mention the *Book of Wives* because it puts me in mind of a book I shall write some day myself. I shall never make much of a success of it; the book needs another Chaucer for its author, an artist and a lover of human nature, a genius who can see both the good and the bad and accept them both, who can see the goodness of the bad even, who can show how the worst men can sing well or play the guitar well, how a wretch through and through is master enough of the art of living to know that the best chair in the house will be that which the cat is occupying. But I will do my level best.

My book will be the *Book of Tenants*. The tenants are those my mother has had in her houses these thirty years. She assures me that, should I make any money out of the tenants in my book, I shall be accomplishing more than she has been able to do out of some of them in her houses. But money or not, no matter; these families that have fitted their lives into the walls—and some of them have

done so to the detriment of lathing and plaster—of our little houses are payment enough in the old currency of human nature.

First will come Mrs. Toothaker. She is proud of being the oldest tenant of all; she rented from my father, and she has never felt quite right about paying the rent to others since he died eighteen years ago. So strongly does she feel on the point that, when last I heard, she was some six years in arrears and still falling behind. She has a husband; but that "poor devil," as she calls him in affection, is no more than another piece of furniture in her house. It is years since she put on the breeches for good and all. The breechless mate gravitates uncertainly in his apologetic lilypad, that suns have bleached a pale yellow, between the hot blueberry plains of August and the rejected litter of tops and boughs of January clearings. It is Mrs. Toothaker's strong arm that bears up the fortunes of the house. Were it not for her dominion over the washtub, there would be no moving pictures for them. They have not missed a change of "pictures" since the first celluloid drama unwound in town with Flora Finch and Vitagraph beauties deep with dimples and paint. Wednesday and Saturday afternoons, as regular as clockwork, they stream towards the caves of darkness where shadows of life stream silently across the screen. I am sure that Mrs. Toothaker knows no more of Plato

than the man in the moon; but she would not be surprised by his analogy of the cave where we mortals sit and see only shadows of the truth in the beam of light coming in at our backs. And I say stream designedly; for Mrs. Toothaker, reversing the usual procedure among lowly Maine folks, is always three strides in advance of her sheepish spouse.

Mrs. Toothaker it is who is always ready to prepare her neighbours for the worst when sicknesses come; when a neighbour's infant developed whooping-cough, she fled into the street on hearing one fit of coughing, exclaiming that she could not bear to stay and see the poor innocent strangle to death. She bears expert if gloomy advice for all ills. She owns a *Home Doctor Book* that pessimistically puts the point of termination of most ailments, after a sufficiently catholic table of symptoms, at any early date and in the graveyard.

Though Mrs. Toothaker is hard put to it to keep the wolf from her rented door, she is a woman who nurses starry hopes. It seems she has, aged as she herself is now and with the wrinkles of sixty Januarys at the corners of her eyes, a mother living. Along with four other children she hopes to inherit her mother's estate. It is a hungry five-acre patch of junipers and blackberries, and crows have to take their lunch-boxes with them when they fly over it, as one can see by the cockle and clamshells that

bleach on its ledges; but she lives in hopes. That estate is her New Jerusalem. I hope the day never comes when she will inherit the place. For then the cottage that is all jasper and onyx and pearl for her now will turn into a shingled shanty; my mother will have lost her oldest tenant and the tenant a dream that was life.

If the wolf haunts Mrs. Toothaker's door, then a whole pack of wolves surely sat on their haunches about the very kitchen range of the Lytumoteedleoddies. That wasn't their name; but it was the inspired one my father gave the family when he saw the mother bringing home a half-pound of liver one day to her brood of nine hungry and overgrown boys. And she was bringing it home with a song. But that was in the Summer when, if the worst came to worst, children could be turned out to pasture on the blueberry barrens. In the Winter, Mrs. Lytum sang out of the other corner of her mouth. She was a widow; and she made the most of her widowhood. It did not matter that her older sons might have manned a brig. She encouraged them in their helplessness. She schooled them in the philosophy of sitting and waiting. If they did get jobs, they were sure to come to grief; John must get his hand punched for a ferrule and come home to centre the family's sympathies upon himself; Ralph must drop a packing case upon his big-toe and draw the neighbours about him. They were all ill-starred.

In the New England phrase, they enjoyed poor health.

Rent was out of the question with the Lytumoteedleoddies. One had rather to feed and clothe them through the months when grasshoppers must beg of the ants. My mother gave them a cord of wood one Winter; it was only an hour after its delivery that the widow sent over to ask if I or some other of my brothers might not come over and saw it! Springs and Autumns found the younger of the children in the schools; but Winters they hung shoeless about their dying kitchen blaze. Their blaze was always dying, anyway. It was a way the Lytum blaze had. Once a windfall of wages came to them; and the mother came home from town with five quarts of oysters in a time when oysters were for pluto-crats only. That was a true Lytum gesture. The boys would wear French serge in their breeches while I sat on knickers of corduroy; but below their knees the magnificence ended and poverty began in bare legs. They were walking examples of feast and famine cheek by jowl. If ever I see a grown man going barefoot on the streets and wearing a solitaire stickpin, I shall know him at once for a Lytumoteedleoddy.

I shall have to give a whole chapter of my book to Seely Nan and her husband Dan. Even then I shall not be able to do them justice. Their luxury was not poverty but religion. And there was an added spice in that they

differed in their tastes. Dan was all for a faith smelling of green meads beside still waters. He craved peace. The Sunday night Methodist testimonials were enough for him. There he grew tearful as he told the temptations that beset one who worked as he worked at the trade of carpentering. He went yearly to the county fair, all three days of it, if you please; and the sins he amassed in those three days were enough to last him the year out. He had fallen at the sign of the Albino Beauty Show; he had broken the head of a poor negro with a soul as white as yours or mine with the third baseball bought for a nickel, and the cigar he had won thereby had been as ashes on his tongue; he had gambled and gained a "baby-doll" lampshade beside which he had never been able to read with any real comfort since; he had even yearned to bet on the horses as they came leaning around the turn, only he had not known whom one placed a bet with. He was damned. John Bunyan knew the feeling when he reflected on the awful sins of his youth when he had abandoned himself to playing tunes on the village chimes.

But Seely Nan's religion was of the red flannel kind. The Methodists were altogether too pastoral for her. Indoors was too small for her tremendous fervour. She needed a brass band for a background. So her altar was the street corner, and she worshipped in the clangour of the Salvation Army. She played the bass drum whenever

she got the chance. Any other instrument was too thin and anæmic for her. Unlike her husband *she* knew she was saved, and she announced the fact at the top of her lungs to the world. But she hungered long between feasts; for the Salvation Army bands visited our town only once or twice a month. Between their visits she took out her zeal upon Dan, admonishing him to leave his sugar and water diet and come to the fountains of milk and honey. When the Salvationists tarried long away, Dan grew thinner and thinner. Like Pertelote in Chaucer's tale she wanted a husband to be male through and through. For forebodings of damnation she would advise a strong laxative. Only at revivals did the two really march in step. They followed revivals about the county in their buggy; and for once Dan's religion took on a roseate tint, for the mince pies they carried under them as they rode were enough to make the damned in the lowest circle of ice sing like the cherubim.

Hard by Seely Nan's and her Dan's chapter will come Dolor Levesque's. He went as far from salvation as they towards it. He was proud in professing himself an atheist. From some ancestor back in the forests around Rivière du Loup whose brain had been darkened by the shadows of pines he had his fatalistic gloom. He scorned the ministrations of the priest of his ancestral faith in spite of wife, in spite of children, even at the

edge of the grave. And when he came to close his eyes at last, neighbours of the faith whispered that a great black cat was seen to sit upon his chest and to leap out of the window into the night when the cry was raised. But Dolor could make such baskets out of peach pits as a boy would carry in his knickers pocket till the day he put on trousers. And so I know that the Author of all things will forgive him his doubts for his art's sake. No one could really be an atheist who loved boys.

Another tenant will take me back farther still into a time when boyhood was very close to babyhood. I cannot disentangle now this lady as tenant from this lady as nurse. She seems to have been both. She was of the stuff the best nurses are made of the wide world over; she was Scotch. I cannot remember how she looked; but I can still hear her voice, which was kinsman to the sleepy crickets and the far whippoorwill, telling the stories that sooner or later turned to dreams. She filled my brain with witches and goblins, unicorns and shyer things. She was one of those rare ladies who have seen a fairy and can tell you how it looks, with dresses like the shimmer of grass on a hot June day before the mowers have had their will. She could sing, too, in a voice that had not faded with her hair. She went behind the rich old Scotch songs all the world sings. She told one the meaning of the "high road" in *Loch Lomond*; one saw the girl following

the lover who for Bonnie Charlie's sake was being brought home in his coffin on the shoulders of his friends. One of her songs I found long afterwards, in a more colourful and richer version, in a collection of ballads. Her song was a pathetic ghost of an old ballad that had lingered on without being captured and put into print at its richest, that had lost its glamour and moonshine and faded out in the harsh light of modern civilization when words are so cheap and so drab. It ran partly like this:

“Last night I slept on a warm featherbed
Along beside my Davy.
To-night I sleep on the cold, cold ground
Along by the Gypsy Tavy.”

To this had the Earl of Casselis' lady come! But the song served its purpose, and it brought me sleep sooner than the coming out of the Summer stars. Surely a tenant who paid her rent in sleep was a rare and blessed one to have!

There was the lady of two husbands. I was too young, when she sojourned under a roof of ours, to know of ladies like Iseult. And had I known of them, I should not naturally have thought of the white-armed lovely one out of Ireland. For our lady was anything but lovely. But there she was with two husbands; the neighbours said so. One was plain husband. He, she confided in one of her acquaintances, built ships. Surely here was a man

for a story! But when one came to inquire further, one learned that he worked as one of the innumerable ants in the shipyards of a nearby port. He drove rivets or something of that monotonous sort. As well call a worker in a modern shoe factory a maker of shoes! So, perhaps, the lady could not be utterly condemned for taking unto herself what neighbourhood gossip termed a "fancy man." He was Mr. Husband. He came to be with her when plain husband was at his rivets. I wonder if Mark of Cornwall did something plain and usual all the live-long day, and so deserved to have Tristram come, who could cut up the red deer like an artist with all the Chivalric flourishes and play on the harp till the stars came out in one's mind? Strange, far-off lady of two loves, no poet has made sin a shining thing for her! But I remember she could make tarts that made the other tarts of this universe things heavy and hard; and, more than that, she made them to give away. Tarts or boxes of precious ointments, the kindnesses of the world make us clean.

So the list grows and grows. I guess it will run to more than one volume, this book of mine. For how else shall I ever be able to get in the family of ten boys and one girl, thrown in for good measure to civilize and tame the males? Each one of the lot was as different and cranky and lovable as any wearer-out of shoes could be. I have

climbed trees for young crows with this one; I have smoked my first cornsilk with that. The father was a man right out of Homer or *Tristram Shandy*. He lived on his prejudices; he nursed his Cockney cocksureness until, with some aid of alcoholic nutriment, he came to be the demigod of all the boys for miles around. He it was who insisted on putting the kitchen range out of the house, fire and all, when it smoked and clouded the amber of his richly irrigated Saturday night mood. He had fire enough in him, then. Could a boy desire more in a hero? He was the one who with his own hands set free the skunk his offspring had trapped. . . . There had been nothing like this along Fleet Street. . . . So his clothes had to be interred. He will live as long as the village tongues can wag in his immortal command to his first-born: "Go drive the rooster out of the barn afore it lays!" By that same word, if the derivation of Cockney from cock's egg can be used as a witness, he was immortally right and true to his London. His wife deserves a portion of a volume at least as great as that Mrs. Shandy occupies; for she, like Mrs. Shandy, was all-powerful by virtue of saying nothing and of obliterating herself so much that she brought out the worst in her husband. Such women have made us males the despots that we are!

And there was the man who had read cheap Western tales till he went about in a sombrero and came at the call

of "Colonel." There was the poor teamster whose hungry horses ate up their carts and harness and so could pull no more but only eat on until they ate up themselves. There was the man who whittled out ships for us boys until his trousers wore through at their points of contact with his seat. There was the man who put his all in a portable sawmill and tried to salvage the flywheel when the thing blew up. There were the inspired boys who made a neighbour's pigsty into an up-to-date ice-house and froze the pigs to death in their zeal. There were . . .

Across the way from my mother's house there is a very fine college. I went there, later on, and learned what I could. But I am very sure that I never learned there one-hundredth part of the art of living and the art of being a human being and enjoying it that I learned in the University of Tenants which lay all about our house when I was a boy. So, however little some of the tenants may have paid to keep me in stockings and shoes, they paid me very well in furnishing my mind. And I am going to dedicate my book to them.

CODFISH CHOWDER AND SUN



Codfish Chowder and Sun

There are many kinds of picnics; but my kind is the only kind that satisfies so well that it lasts me through a whole year.

To begin with you must have the Maine coast. But more than that—a particular part of the Maine coast, Casco Bay with its islands, a new one for every day in the year, ranging in size from Great Chebeague and Great Island, each capable of supporting far-flung villages, to the Chunk o' Pork and the Pound o' Tea and Jello with its bushel of soil. And you must have my kind of a family—one in which there are enough babies sprinkled in among the grownups to keep a panoramic camera busy. A picnic without a dozen yards of grandchildren would be only half a picnic for my mother. Not any children at all will do, either; they must be babies who take life as a sunrise or a circus or both together even when they still go on all fours.

Then you must have islands with fir trees packed so closely together that you might walk along their tops,

if you were spry, and you must have the myrrh of the balsams in your nose along with the smell of the sea all a Summer's day. It must be a day in August and one of the kind that you will find nowhere else on this round earth save Maine; northwest wind blowing the sky as clean and clear as a bell, a blue sky that you can fairly hear ring, and white galleons of clouds with flat keels which sail over by thousands and yet never get in the way of the sun. The sunshine turns everything to amber and crystal and pours over the world like a tide. You can hear it lapping the granite coasts. The whole world is very hot yet airy; you can smell the tar in the caulking of the boats. Your face turns into a russet banner. Your brain turns into sunlight. The ocean grows darker and deeper blue between the white crests that are coming in from far Spain. The sea and the sun get in under your soul.

I cannot begin to tell you all the ingredients you mix together to make this day of bliss. Somewhere at the beginning you stir in a motor boat of the sort that is wide in the beam, good to hold a small army. You add spray all over everybody, especially the children; for my picnic would lack spice if all of us were not well drenched down with brine and salted down till our eyes were a fast blue. To have the best spray you need a flooding tide to kick up a chop against the wind. Throw into the picnic all

the sandwiches, ginger ale, coffee, salads, fruit, cakes, and doughnuts you please, for nothing can spoil the mess. You have the safe *sine qua non* in the baskets at the bottom of the boat. Nothing could kill the flavour of the clams and lobsters you are carrying with you alive. The codfish are alive and waiting, too, out in the ocean you are heading into.

It is well to add an aunt who makes it a point to be prepared. She will have the salt and the pepper all done up in separate packages and marked against mistake; and she will have castor oil and all sorts of unguents and ointments for the aches and the burns the children are bound to collect. A dash of uncles who are landlubbers and who are finding their annual sea a moving and epic affair is always in order. And don't forget the lady who will bring all sorts of cups and spoons and knives and forks that no one will possibly have time to use when you are all into the feast up to the eyes. A demijohn of cold spring water you surely must have. If it is the old-fashioned kind of crock with blue flowers painted on it by hand, so much the better. Add a pinch or two of song. For one should approach this picnic singing, or trying to sing.

After the many islands, all white with granite and dark green with spruces and cedars, all looking as bright and new as they looked on the morning of Creation, you

must have the island where you are to land. I am the last person to be finicky, but this island should be absolutely like Pond Island. Now Pond Island has always been in the family along with my mother's ladder-back chairs and melodeon. When they were young and quite brand-new to each other, mother and father lived one Summer upon this jewel they had acquired soon after marriage. It was before most of us were born or "thought of," as Maine folks delicately put the matter of generation. It was lucky for most of us, for, though the island is the very heart of a picnic, it is not for the everyday use of unhardy souls. The house they built had to be anchored down with chains; and the chains had to be moved each time the wind shifted. For Pond Island is the last place between Maine and Spain. There isn't a tree on it; the twelve winds from the twelve corners of the sky use it for their playground. The spray of a sou'easter salts the springs that bubble up in its very centre. The sheep that bite its grass have to be thickset and low to the earth; they carry their heads raked like the stacks and masts of ocean craft. They are adopted cousins of the gales and the surf. The island can be smelt miles to the lee, since it is one mass of bayberry and juniper.

Pond Island has its name from the many ponds which pit its slopes. Years ago a lobsterman found a crock full of Spanish doubloons in a cleft of its rocks. That was enough

to bring searchers for the treasure of Captain Kidd hither to dig in droves. All Maine fishermen believe in buried treasure. Why shouldn't they, when any lobster pot may bring fortune flapping and kicking to the surface? But pirate legends are one of Maine's richest crops. So you can judge the number of pits on the island. Yet richer than any jewelled crucifix any freebooters ever hoarded are the pools far out in the ledges where rock-crabs slide like great emeralds through crystal. All the shores slant down into deep water so clear that you can see great fish and more mysterious things fathoms down moving beautifully like thoughts one has in the starlight of a Winter night. Mystery comes close up to the island, ribboned kelp and jellyfish that shine like dim moons. But one place, open to the open ocean and the White Bull, the reef which bellows and whitens forever with surf on the rim of the horizon, is the holy of holies of all the island's windy beauty. It is Shell Cove, and it is heaped with the petals of flowers that blossom in the sea, white with shells of living things that flourished æons ago and that will go on flourishing for æons to come, God being willing and God being the lover of sheer, delicate, pearly things that He was of old. Upon this floor the long breakers curl over through the nights and the days, the years and the ages, over and over in arcs that are flawless and complete, patterns of rhythm akin to the rhythm of the

circling stars. The tremendous whisper of the things the sea tries to tell to men runs through and through the hours like peace. The air is snowed with sea-gulls leaning their white breasts on the wind and holding it in the symmetry of their wings. Foam takes flight, and the clouds go over; the place is like Gilead and the cedars of Lebanon. Bones of ships are bleaching among the shells to be your firewood. It is here the feast must be spread. No, no other island will ever do.

The first thing to do is to put most of the babies, with suitable chaperons equipped to feed them, ashore on Pond Island. Those that can run can chase the butterflies which grow bigger out here and fly over like flakes of the clouds and the sky, and those that can only creep can wallow in the sand. The landlubber uncles are best dropped along with the infants and women. But the hardier picnickers are off for the heaving ridges of Lumbo Ledges and the cod which graze there. I shall not dwell on the angling for the savoury ladings of the kettles. Deep-sea fishing is a means to an end; it has no beauty or sufficiency in itself. I have crossed the Atlantic a modest number of times, and in such rolling timber as the *Beata Marta*, of cursed memory, built to ferry bananas and yams on the Caribbean Sea but launched on greater waters without ballast in the desperate times of the War; but I have been seasick only once. That was deep-sea

fishing in a motor launch that rolled in a scorching July sun on oily swells off Pond Island. The smell of the fish, the agony of the inexorable anchor, the double movement of the boat—it was such a combination of unspeakable things that undid me. When they put me ashore in their wrath on the island and went back to their fishing, I sat on the solid earth but was not aware of its solidity. The island kept tipping up and sliding off just the way the boat had done. But I won't spoil the picnic by remembering melancholy things.

Nor are the fish one catches in the ocean exciting things. If a twenty-pound cod had the fight of a trout in his inches, there would be few dories left over here to tell the tale; they would all be over by Spain. The bite of a haddock is like the bump of a sluggish automobile in the dark against a wall. There is no piquancy in it. Suppose a hake should take hold of your line like a bass! There is no blue lightning in salt-water fishing this side of whales. There is no charm of the unexpected. After you have hooked something, it remains only to pull up, as one would saw wood, steadily and grimly, to see whether one has gotten a hake or the anchor. Angling needs delicacy. The line you fish with here is a hawser, the hook is a grappling iron. This is business not sport. The fish you catch, though, are satisfactory things. They flop over the boat bottom with belated surprise, bulge-

eyed, and plump with their toothsome-ness. They have bronze spots on their sleek sides, and deep in their eyes shines the Winter moon. They are ripe for the picnic.

The cod taken, you are for the shore and a fire. It is easy to get a cradle of coals as big as a bed with so much old timber frosty with salt lying all about. You fetch the big iron kettle that was cast to feed a family of the pioneer age. Sling it on a green fir-bole and put it over the blaze. Now begins the ritual of your chowder. First you cut salt pork into ribbons and throw it in. When it begins to seethe, throw in halved onions and fry them till they squirm like hissing adders. Dowse in half a jugful of water on the blue fumes. Cut up the cod-fish and throw them in heads and fins and all. Throw in salt by the fistful, pepper by the pound. Slice potatoes, and in with them. Keep the mess stirred up. Give everybody a stick. Let everybody stir. Too many cooks are the making of this broth. The more cinders and bark you can get into the kettle the tastier the pottage. You stir in everything you can find. The spray from the sea, the iodine of kelp, the smell of bayberry bushes scorching in the sun. Even the wind and the blue day get into the chowder sooner or later. It is a wedding of sun and sea.

When the thing begins to smell like Kingdom Come and boils over for the third time, heave it off the fire and set it where everybody can ladle in. Here is molten man-

hood, liquid thews and sinews. Throw away the cups and spoons the innocence of the thoughtful aunt has prepared. Split sticks and clamp them on clamshells. There you have the only proper spoons for this chowder of the sun. Let everybody squat down on haunches like squaws, fall to, and dip in. By the time the fish are caught and cooked, everybody will be on the far slope of famine anyway, and boiled dogfish would taste like Esau's pottage. But when the chowder before you is the very marrow of the sea and the milk and honey of paradise, you can see how thin the veneer we call civilization is. Aunts who would eat a Boston cracker so modestly that you would never be aware that eating was going on become gorging gluttons. Uncles with dyspepsia devour bones and all. The children wallow in savouriness to their eyes. Of course everybody burns his mouth. But burnt mouths are as much a part of picnics as soiled clothes. It would be well, though, to serve rubber ponchoes to the children along with the chowder. . . . Don't forget to save the crinkly-edged lucky bones from the heads of the fish. They are fine to keep for pocket pieces; and I know a man who has good luck the whole year through for no other reason than his breeches pockets rattle with them.

The rest is silence and orgy. . . . Saint Gluttony!—
Beulah Land!

When the sharpest edges of hunger are dulled by the chowder, then it is time to fall upon the lobsters. They have been broiling in the coals, and you rake them out now, split them down the back, and pour in butter, salt, and pepper. I heard of a man once who thought broiled-live-lobster was a food of doubtful value; but that was many years ago, and the man never lived long enough to grow wise. Some folks may turn up their noses, but for me the most delicate part of this creature that is all delicacy is the tomally. The tomally may be the entrails of the creature, but so are all the subtlest meats—heart, kidney, liver.

After the lobsters come the clams. I don't mean those fat, hard-shelled imitations that pass for clams below Cape Cod; those things are quahaugs; we have them in Maine, but no one dreams of eating them. I mean the thin oval vases that have to be mined in the mud. These are really the crown of the feast. So one should leave some corner vacant in his frame for them. Now the kinds of clambakes are legion. But my way of baking clams is the only proper one. You build a series of fires and let them burn down to coals. Then you throw on a layer of rockweed fresh pulled from the water on each. You dump on a peck of clams on top of this and cover all with more rockweed. Then you let nature attend to the rest. And nature is the mother of miracles! I know there

are those who roast clams in the open on iron grates and the sides of defunct cookstoves. I know there are those who play the mason and build elaborate fireplaces of bricks or stones. But all this artistry is sheer nonsense. When I am in the open, I cook as the open decrees. I want none of stoves. And when my clams are uncovered, they are wide open yet all have their juice within them, and they have the taste of the rockweed smoked into their every tissue. The best parts of the sea, the sky, and the earth meet in them. They melt in the mouth and leave one thinking of what a splendid, round, and sufficient thing this old ball of an earth is. I have eaten the best feast the Old Dominion can spread; I have tasted the burnt honey which is the November sweet-potato taken ripe from the ground and roasted on the coals in a Virginian twilight; and an Uncle Remus of a negro brought oysters still dripping with the Chesapeake to give their flavour to the bake. To add piquancy, the yams were stolen that we had, and a long day of toying with the twelve-inch rifles of Fort Monroe had reduced us to a band of aching voids. But that banquet does not hold a candle to my native clams martyred in rockweed.

The series of clambakes is necessary in my family. For, having finished one lot, we all move on to the next. It is a progressive feast. You may not believe it, but I know a woman who is a perfect mother and puts her children

first always in all things; but when that lady starts eating clams she goes on through thick and thin to the last heap of shellfish; and her offspring might fall into the sea or immolate themselves in the coals, and she would never look up. Once annually she neglects her children; it is on our picnic.

After the clams are stowed away, if anyone has a place for cake or sandwiches or such Monday and Tuesday things, let him fill it. But at the last pile of clams the numbers of us are few. Only the hardiest meet there. And by that time the day is well down.

We go home through the sunset on waters that spread benediction around. We do not notice the departure of the sun, for we have the sun under our belts; and sunshine will be ours for another whole year.

PRINCES OF THE COAST



Princes of the Coast

Maine people stay in the mind even more vividly than the thousand miles of coast they sprawl along. That is saying a good deal, for their coast is crystal and amber, and it is as bright in the memory as dolphin candlesticks or the prisms on old-fashioned lamps. The bayberry boils in the sun till the air runs honey; shells drift the beaches with snow; granite frosts the ledges; the firs turn every horizon into sharp and delicate lacework; the sun sets its teeth into all things; the ocean has the look of new steel. Everything looks as if it had just left the fingers of the Creator. Yet the easy people who salt their fish there by fog and make their hay by sun, for all that they seem at first sight to be negligible in this etching which is Maine, are really the pith of the whole clean state.

Easy is the word. But the ease of these people is the

ease that suits well with lace and spurs. The Maine folks are not indolent, and they are never unkempt. There are no busier people in the world. There are the potatoes to dig in a garden the size of a rug, a barn that would make ten of the potato patch to paint whiter than a span of the celestial wall, an engine to be doctored in its vitals, a boat to be scraped of barnacles and all the other little truants of the sea that love to steal rides, a seine to run through a tar kettle, pine plugs to be cut for wedging shut the jaws of lobsters that are to consort in cars. There is more work to do than you could shake a stick at. But the workers take their own sweet time at it. They approach it as artists would. They plan; they meditate; they sit and wait for the divine spark. They make the mere sitting a glorious business in itself. None can sit more wholeheartedly or more philosophically than they. For there is just one way to split a hake to dry it or to make an arrow for the vane that points the winds. There is just the proper mood to be caught when one does a job and just the proper phase of the moon.

Long enough out of Maine to have forgotten a little the Maine ways, I proposed the other day to a native mason that he might help me with a fireplace the day following. He will never think very highly of me again, nor shall I ever forget the hurt look in his eyes. He came a week later, when masonry was fitted properly into the

design of his day. Because Maine folks are all cut from such cloth Maine sees no devastating changes. All the men who make it their life's business to take the world by the horns and batter it about to suit them have been gone into the West these many years and become millionaires. They come back now and then in their opulence to buy the Sheraton tables and the Sandwich glass of their ancestral houses to take back to their trans-Sierran bungalows. But one thing they are never able to buy from their easy-going kindred is the serenity in living that makes these Down-Easters the kings that they are. Princes and artists, even when they farm twelve acres and a string of fifty lobster traps—aristocrats evermore.

The gestures of these kings are not things that grow overnight. They have centuries of life artistically lived behind them. If there is in our country that elusive thing called culture, that is, the science of fitting oneself gracefully into the landscape, as an old farmhouse fits, then Maine is the best place to look for it. This is a fact that the alien artists and tourists never reckon with as they rush up and down these white and blue coasts to fill their eyes and their portfolios with the picturesque and the primitive. So it is no wonder they are puzzled when the natives elude them entirely; and they have to fall back on the landscape alone and seek in rugged rocks what they intended to find. They learn to avoid even the farm-

houses. For it is disconcerting indeed to find an architecture here which makes that of their suburban America look like something from the ten-cent store. Primitive! why, the great-grandfathers of these men who are nursing potatoes and selling lobsters were sitting and drinking the wines of Portugal that they had fetched home in their own clipper-ships and warming themselves leisurely in front of their Adam fireplaces when the forbears of these riders in Rolls-Royces were pulling up stumps and living in logs and snuffing ashes in the wilderness that was to be Cleveland. The tourists are the pioneers here. It is not strange, therefore, that they keep to the highways and the poor imitations of New York hotels or the extremely wild places where there are no easy-living native artists to put them off their bearings.

The Maine men who loiter over their words as if words were precious things may have patches on their seats; but as often as not they live in houses that have gathered all the finest things in good taste from the four corners of the earth. Farmhouses, but one soon discovers that the Maine farmhouse is often a Georgian mansion with carven fireplaces in all fourteen rooms, a portico at the front with Greek columns that rest on granite slabs, and a cathedral aisle of elms leading up to it all. And the barns are mansions, too. Usually one speaking of barns thinks of the red sheds of New York State and sections farther

west. But here barns are places for princes, worthy to be joined to the houses, great temples with snowy clap-boards and green blinds to all the windows, if you please, and a cupola and a gilded vane over all. Whenever I want to feel lifted up, and kingly of heart, I go into a Maine barn by choice. I have found no worthier place for Homer than a Maine haymow.

The farmers of Maine in the old days were also merchant princes of the sea. They went around the Horn in their own ships for their honeymoons. They trafficked in China tea and teakwood from Siam. They brought home spices, and they brought home the rumour of great places and the beauty of far lands. They mixed their potatoes with the ships that they built at the foot of their potato patches. Their own pines stepped down from the hills and carried sails around the earth. That was in the days when ships were still noble things, with the white majesty of sails upon them and a power and speed that were silent and clean. The makers of such craft could swing a sledge or hammer on an anvil or hold the handles of a plough with the best and brawniest of men, for these were Yankee princes not above sweat and labour with the hands. But they moved with the air of masters whatever they did; and they found a lifetime long enough for the serenity that suited well with their tall ships and their large houses of white and green. They

planted elms just where elms should be, and with their own hands to have the job done right; and they put panels under windows that architects come across a continent to copy. They made their fireplaces right, and they put their verandas on the warm sides of their houses where they could lie in privacy under the westering sun. Architects, masons, ploughmen, fishermen, merchants, and builders and captains of ships, they were also schooled in the fine art of being men who found life a graceful affair up to the edge of the grave.

And now that the sea-captains have gone to rest in the old graveyards, their children and their children's children carry on their tradition in smaller ways. Smaller because the day of wooden ships is set and their present boats are bred small. But if the world has shrunk for these Maine coast folks, their serenity and artistry at many trades abide. Every coast man plays many parts. He farms, he fishes, he cuts wood, plays the carpenter and mason, hunts, and, best of all, he goes at each as if he were a boy in knee pants. His food comes from catholic places—the blueberry plains, the Grand Banks, the furrow, the rocks where lobsters hide, the tidal mud. His manhood is compact of the wild things of the forest and the sea and the domesticated things of the garden. No wonder his eyes grow bluer as he gets along in years. He leaves the plough in the furrow to go fishing, the

seine at the stakes to hunt the spotted deer. So he does not dry up as the Vermonter into a lean complaint of a man and a bundle of blisters. When the land turns fallow, he can turn to the blue pastures of the sea. When the fogs and the dogfish make fishing a burden, he can hoe his corn and beans. Between tides he can carry on that trade in which fishing and agriculture kiss, digging clams.

One of these princes whom I know makes a specialty of hunting the fox in off seasons for herring and hake. He makes a modest income in pelts each year. But that is only the rind of the matter. The pith is the fact that this man lives the glory of Robin Hood in cutting across the woods to intercept Reynard whom his dogs harry in widening circles. So adept is he that he can smell a fox in November frosts as you or I would smell a beefsteak; and he can take a raging male fox from his hole by holding his under-jaw. This hunter, let me add, is not at all put out of the design when he enters his Colonial house under its balustraded balcony. It takes a fine, big house to measure up to his inches.

Any trade of the Maine man is as full of spice and adventure as a May meadow. Fishing alone takes in many arts. The fisherman must build his boats and traps. His catch goes up the ladder in size from the smelts of October to the horse mackerel of July. Now and then

there is a stranded whale to cut up and dispose of. Fish to salt, to dry, to smoke, to prison alive behind slats and in bags. The life of the Grand Banks fisher of the cod is a dreary monotone beside this pageantry of fishing that changes its colours and complexion with the seasons. How could the Maine fisherman grow acidulous or stiff? And the Maine woman, his wife, is a piece from the same whole cloth. She is buxom and large, in mind as in body, where the New Hampshire housewife is apt to be gaunt and bony or pindling.

Why, the cookery of Maine alone could give proof that here the business of daily living is a fine art. No need to speak of pies, for Maine is the mother of these. The anxious mother in the Maine ballad knew which side her son's bread was buttered on when she was examining into the qualifications of her future daughter-in-law,

"Can she make a punkin pie, Billy Boy, Billy Boy?"

A fig for moral rectitude! It is upon that pie that Maine wedlock is founded. I know that states farther south have a version in which cherry pie ousts the pumpkin; but that fact is enough to show that the version is a perverted one. Whoever has not eaten a pie made of Maine huckleberries taken with the fog on them has not tasted life really; and whoever has not sniffed hot blueberry juice

running over in an oven will have to wait till the Last Judgment for completed bliss. There is no real piecrust below Portsmouth. But it is enough to talk of solidier foods—meats and gravies that all states have a free chance at cooking well. Chicken soup in Maine makes the usual chicken soup a ghostly thing. A spoon will stand alone in it; there are dumplings thinner than tubes of macaroni ever dreamt of being that crumple up like rose leaves. The beans that Maine bakes, even in its logging camps, are the hardy ancestors of those degenerate weaklings that have made Boston a name known the world over. And as for its fish—well, I must pause for fear I should run out of hyperboles. Only I *will* say that baked smelts with salt pork scraps, which are the keystone of all Maine cookery, criss-crossed upon them take no back seat among the oysters and the caviar of this world. Give these Maine cooks pork, flour, an onion or two, and a fish just done flopping, and you have the Gates Ajar and all the Delectable Mountains right in your backyard. There are many, remember, who believe that cookery is still, as it always has been, the index of a people's inner harmony and a patent of culture.

The truth of the matter is that Maine folks have escaped the narrower patterns of Yankeedom. The sourness and smallness, the shrewdness and the "saving" quality of that race that has made our national backbone rigid

are not the mainstays of their natures. No people who have lived in the bright opal fogs and the wines of Maine airs could be hard or harsh. The quality of Maine vowels speaks volumes on the Maine character. The nasal trumpetings of Connecticut and Vermont are not heard here. Anglo-Saxon "breakings," as in the South, are the symbols of an inner generosity of spirit, "gyarden," "cyow,"—the kindly drawl in mouthing homely words. In mind as in stature these men run big.

Maine is not so much a maritime member of these states of ours as a state of mind. People in a backwater seem somehow to grow into something noble and calm as the elements themselves. This state was ancient when it was carved from the side of Massachusetts and elevated to the hollow title of statehood by the Compromise of 1820. It is as old as the jovial paternalism of overseas noblemen of very early Colonial days, Sir William Phips, Sir Ferdinando Gorges, and the Sieur Pierre de Monts. France and England played for its rich, dark forests and emerald bays laced with silver herring in a royal game of chess with Redskins and blue-eyed men as pawns. It is a significant fact that Colonial Maine was settled by Church of Englanders and not by gloomy Dissenters, by men who took their religion as gracefully as the men of Massachusetts Bay took theirs hard. It was no wonder that many of the Huguenots who came over to America chose

Maine. So the fever and stress of states in the cyclonic paths of national progress have left Maine untouched. Its sons who *must* bite into granite and hammer the earth into tools for materialistic gains have left it and gone hammering across the West. The sons who were more interested in living comfortably at home with their own souls have remained. Developments of the enormous waterpower in a state where three big rivers come down many hills have always been talked about; but they have not materialized. But great houses with pillars and cupolas have whitened on the hills under the pavilions of elms for two centuries. And there have been plenty of wide hearths with Greek harmony built into them to draw men to evening meditation. Colonial portraits and peace of mind, pride in ancestors and grace in taking life as a whole matter, the "get-alongableness" which is culture. The people here have lived like gentlemen who work. Those two things, the gentleman and work, the Old World had said could never mix; but Maine has given the old axiom the lie. For Maine, partly by virtue of its landscape, has made work so zestful and rich a thing that it has become play—play for the imagination as well as the muscles. The building of ships, and of little boats even, is the sort of business that poets are naturally best fitted to undertake. And Izaak Walton has testified long since to the fact that the taking of fish is the cradle

of philosophy. So getting a livelihood here has turned into a sport. To have the sea always in one's eyes above the compacted evergreens of shining islands is a sure promise of beatitude. To make work a leisure, to make what one happens to have in the way of possessions enough for luxury—here, it seems to me, is the secret that folks in this backwater have known and lived by these many years.

At any rate, these artists in living are my own people. One can be pardoned if one thinks the best of one's own. After all, it is provincialism, it is prejudice—*my* rose in *my* garden against the world—that has created English lyrical poetry. And I would not swap my kind of people, prejudiced as they are in favour of an un-American enjoyment of what they have, for all the rest of the globe. "Boomers" and Rotarians have not found Maine people very anxious to climb aboard bandwagons or to uplift and sell themselves otherwise. But visitors have often gone away feeling very humble. It is an illuminating experience to discover a race of people who are satisfied with themselves as they are, who do not care to grow into some dubious other thing. I doubt if the Athenians of the golden century were very different.

DEVON THE DELECTABLE



Devon the Delectable

Devon I have known in many moods and all the seasons; but I never found her so delightful as when I went south one year to meet the Spring early and look for traces of my ancestors. I found lots of ancestors, and other things more enduring and lovely.

I went by bicycle, and I laid down three rules for journeying. First, avoid railroads as you would poison; then, ride into the wind and lean against it as it comes up pure and unbreathed from southern seas where Atlantis sank; and lastly, keep the sound of the sea in the ears and the sight of the sea in the eyes.

So westward through the marshes of Sedgemoor by moonlight I rode, where good Somerset and Devon yeomen mingled their blood with ditch water and died for a shadow of a king, eerie fogs keeping me company like ghosts out of the older time. Then Taunton, where ill-

starred maidens met Monmouth all in holiday white to give him the Bible that sold them into slavery in the New World when the Bloody Assizes lay on the land. After Taunton the Quantock Hills and beechwoods which bred the shadowy Ancient Mariner in the poet's brain. Then Porlock and the sea, hills on great hills, moors the Doones roved, winds that made me feel like wings, azure veils folded over the earth, lighthouse lamps twinkling at every dewfall, and always the sea, sea, sea. That was North Devon.

Guidebooks I had none; for they are the curse of travellers who go on a bicycle in search of beauty. They are best read when one is back home, the trip safely done, and one's mind has turned sunshine into everlasting crystals and cottages into new Psalms. So I have no memory of all the places or the exact order of them. Lynmouth I recall and hanging woods, and a lighthouse that came right up into backyards to keep the houses company. There was a taste of *Lorna Doone* in such a desolation of rocks and tors as one sees in landscapes of the moon. Twisted thews of the world showing bare to the sky. Emerald streams flashed seaward through bogs where the pixies live. There was such a hill as poets alone would dare dream of; Great Hangman's Hill and Little, as if the poor wretch who was hanged by his own stolen sheep athwart the spine of the hill, as folks say,

had to go and get himself hanged on a smaller hill, too, to make the wages of sin sure! Clouds nested here; and I rode over pearly pavements with the patchwork of meads and orchards showing through rifts far below. The hill broke off at its highest and fell with dizzy horror straight to the bottom of the sea. The water under that cliff must be deeper than any in mid-ocean. Andes of granite showed forlorn heads far down here and there; but mostly the water was an indigo and incalculable as sin. Perhaps Tristram slept down there with the Iseult who was dearer than wife or life in some one of the cities that have sunk here on the last edge of the world.

But the ribbon of road wound down from the clouds and places of loneliness and eagles, and I coasted into a New England comforter of ploughland, dairy lands speckled with cows, wheat fields warm green, oat fields cold, gingham patches where potatoes went mountaineering, drifted snows of orchards in bloom, fields hung out like clothes on a line, fields sweeping over hills and far away, fields the size of a petticoat, every colour, every shape, places where homely beauty and men grew. The air turned liquid thyme. The winds went down; cottages came up, smoke of chimneys, and neighbourly voices. A dog and barefoot boys tumbled into sight. Housewives knotted aprons in their hands and discoursed eloquence of pies. A school burst out. Roses grew unruly

and caught at my cap over walls. Ale smells drifted out of an open inn door. The road fell into a cobbled street. A clock struck six. Combe Martin.

I remember the silver mines of Combe Martin. They went out of use about the time of the Third Edward. But they are always there, in the talk of Combe Martin people. Under the sea, most of them. But such silver as would make Solomon's tarnish with envy. And the wise men of the village go home from their dreams of silver over tankards and take the silver of herrings from the sea at their doorsteps and live fat and laugh merry. In Combe Martin you can see every detail of garden and backdoor economy, in spite of the inevitable high walls, for every backyard hangs like a tapestry on the hills behind the houses; the smoke from chimney pots goes up along the furrows. Neglect in the onion bed is village property instantly. No wonder the Combe Martin twilights are patchworked with seats of Combe Martin trousers bending to eleventh hour weeding under the evening star. It was in the inn built like a pack of cards upended that I bought a rabbit pie that the pixies on the moors above had had a finger in. It had moorland moonlight under its crust. I ate it whole at one sitting under the big stars with my feet in a gorse patch. It is the ideal way to eat meat pie; no dreams thereafter are troubled by one's grandmother.

Combe Martin has a church, a thing of fragile loveliness white against the walls of green that shut the village in. It must be easy to be holy in such a fair house of God, with great ambitions and princely greeds far away on the other side of the world. Combe Martin has a harbour, too. Or rather it had one in the balmy days of the Plantagenets, and a deep one, eloquent of great ships, forested with masts and spars. But shifting sands have filled it in. The ships have kept pace with the shallowing sea. To-day they are pea-pod boats that one can anchor by leaving on their sides high and dry when one goes to supper. Tall Flanders hats and subtle wines of Bordeaux, chalices from Cadiz and oils of Cyprus have given place to mussels and whittings. The harvests change; but the sea remains a page in the book of Devon life.

From Combe Martin I went up into skyey silences again, above the larks even, on a cliff road hung over the sea. At one place a half-mile of the road had fallen into the depths. Not even a single reef marked its grave in the ocean that keeps secrets of Devon's kingly past in its bosom. Cries of curlews and flames of broom alone clothed the wastes. Once the road went down to a cove where an ancient, goodly square-rigger lay on its scuppers in the sleep of death. From Molucca and Java it had come home at last to lay its bones where it had been born, where the masters who had manned it lay in little

churchyards and gave their manhood back to Devon's soil. I sketched a castle here, crumbling and green with ivy, until a passerby told me it had been built in 1830. So soon does nature in Devon take things to her bosom. Indignantly I went aloft on the skyline again, shaking the dust of Watermouth from my feet.

Under my fore wheel a-sudden stretched a place of roofs. I descended a cleft and found Hele Bay. Etymologists may rave; but I am sure Greek mariners found and named that tiny port with the name of the sun which pours so into the narrow place that the air is solid honey. Here I caught up on sleep and ate myself unfit to ride for days on clotted cream. I helped scrape barnacles from boats. I explored enormous chimneys of rock where I heard an unseen sea raving in the dark; great gulfs came up with sinister suddenness almost to my feet; but my Maine coast blood kept me from being caught napping. Out of Hele I walked to tea places, Berry-narbor of the windy tower and carpets of crocuses below that overflowed the graves, the whole village, and went shining off into the woods; another village, whose name I have lost, and a mill where a whole family sat to meals around a disused millstone with the everlasting song of running water under the flagstones at their feet. There was a cottage buried under ivy where a man lived who made it his life's sweet business to collect Toby jugs. He

had twenty of those eighteenth century gentlemen in tri-cornered hats, who hold ale or milk in their bulging bellies, blinking with Shandean faces into the firelight. And here I have tried for years to get one perfect Toby! If ever that man is found dead and his house ransacked, you may know where to look for the guilty.

Right above my lodgings towered the rock where I sat after sundown to watch the lamps of many-roofed Ilfracombe come out, keeping time with the stars. Perilous and deep as sleep that place went down, azure and dim amethyst, to wed and mingle its being with the twilit waves. Ilfracombe is best seen thus at a distance. It is too conscious of its own picturesqueness, too big, and its crooked streets are webs for tourist flies. A railroad, though one-lunged, feeds thousands into it. It has its points, though; in the midst of dancing pavilions there is the little church on the spit where lamps lit for evensong used to guide mariners home. God's praise and men's workaday ways come close together in Devon.

Quitting Ilfracombe, on the elbow of Devon, I turned south and rode into a dream of high lands musical with the thin crowing of cock pheasants, gilded with gorse, checkered with cloud shadows, fragrant of apple blossoms in sudden farmsteads where earthen jars bottled sunshine for early rhubarb, where bees hymned of honey about wicker hives and cows were turning marigolds

into butter. Groves of blackthorn, church vanes swimming, dales filled level with primroses and violets, smelling as the angels must smell. Pearls of sheep on all the hills. Afar the blazing blue sea going uphill, as the sea always does for one on high places, flowered with sails. Creaking carts. Braunton's children going to school, the girls' hair so tight in pigtails that their eyes went a-slanting, the boys with skim-milk eyes one sees by all seas, eyes that Drake and Raleigh must have had in their heads, wistful as fires in October. Saunton's old country gentlemen in coarse tweeds, with faces like frost-bitten cranberries. When old age comes upon me, ho for knickers and North Devon! I rode the full moon high into the sky across the sand barrens below Saunton. A mysterious world swept seaward skeletoned with ribs of old boats. The air ran silver; the sea went out till it was a jet edge to limitless moonfire and opal. There lay petrified forests under the sea beheld by sailors when the winds are north-west, Lyonesse and diamonds in dead kings' crowns for Arthur's last tournament.

I got up with the larks and, leaving Barnstable with its curse of railroad, rode west again through radiant dawn along the flats to Appledore. A second dawn spread on every hand, for the apple trees were at high tide. If you want to smell what Beulah Land will be like, you must have the tang of the sea blowing through apple

blossoms. If you can add dawn's dew and Devon, so much the sweeter for your nose! Over a bridge, and Bideford opened up its arms. It is a town fallen asleep, like so many in Devon, to the dream of ancient greatness when its men in pointed beards and starched ruffs walked the streets like princes with the flavour of far lands in their speech, pipes for new and strange incense in their mouths, and deviltry to set upon Spanish galleons in their hearts. Oak and bronze the Virgin Queen, Gloriana, found the men of Devon. It is in Bideford that one may frequently see inlaid Spanish cannon, mouth down in the sand. They washed in under the sea from the Armada ships that broke their noble hearts on Devon's iron rocks. If Bideford's quays lie idle now save for little boats, oak and bronze are here still and men who dare the sea. One has sails gleaming through his apple trees, masts above his cottage windows, dingy shops that smell of hemp and oakum and hold curios, shark's teeth, Javan beans, garnered from the world's ends, and inns full of the best tales of man, the stories of the sea. Bloody Corner is next, where the Danes died in droves, and Kingsley's town, Westward Ho. A dike of loose stones rounded by the mysterious commotions in the depths of the sea and cast up here as a building of the ages lies between this corner of Devon and the waves that come in, as even as Roman legions, from the far places of the sunset.

I was faced south again. Cliffs began once more to rear their heads. Behind them islands of villages with spires all golden swam above a sunlit land. I remember the pew carvings of St. Helen's at Abbotsham. Here mute Miltons had had their say. Uncultured, unskilled, each man, whose chief business in life was raising a big family, had snatched a pathetic bit of immortality from old night; the carpenter had carved his square and hammer, the sailor his anchor, the pious man his Saviour's wounded hands and feet; some had drawn their own honest, homely faces for the ages to look upon. Poor humble souls! and yet how blessed life must have tasted to them, in their pews full of blooming children of their loins, when fragrances of their new-mown hay mingled through open windows with prayers and Psalms.

Alwington and its church, that was half barnyard and farmstead that folded in the church, had the glory of the Gospels upon it. The Christmas story mingled with bleatings of sheep! The vicar had the four seasons painted on his face. He took me in his dogcart up and down the running beauty of the hills he loved, the hills he had grown into. By his side I came to see the aureole about each byre and stack and tree. A cobbler sitting under roses pegged my shoes. Grizzled yeomen stopped their ploughs in the furrow to salute me as I passed. Black-

birds sang; earth and man had the savour of Spring. And on all the hills was peace.

I was come now to a place full of ancestors. Their graves paved the church floor; they held the green outside. Here slept those who across the years had given me this blessedness of being alive on a March morning in such a place. A tablet bore witness that the patrons of this church had borne my name since the days of King John. This village was bone of my bone, a beauty not dreamt of, but part and parcel of my being from centuries on centuries. One grandiloquent Caroline tomb took my eye. It had whole cohorts of sons and daughters below the joined hands of husband and wife—and each son and daughter was alike as peas in a pod. The carver had been hard pressed by this couple's prodigality in offspring. He had had to crowd in two sons above the heads of the earlier; and an extra daughter lay swaddled below the rank of older girls. But I read a melancholy tale between the stone lines. The tomb had been raised by the sole surviving son. Devon paid a terrible toll for her loyalty to Charles the King in the Civil Wars. Here was Portledge, the house and acres of men of my name, some of them gentlemen of gilt heels and some plain squires, through reigns and changes for well on to a thousand years. A home surely! If families are blent sun-

shine and soil of their homesteads, Portledge's high trees were a holy part of me. The house itself Kingsley has described in the *Water Babies*; it is a counterpart of the one where poor Tom got lost in a network of flues stretching from the time of the Wars of the Roses to Victorian days. In its portraits I imagined I saw the chin I wear thrusting itself through the centuries. But I recall more vividly the kitchens, the oldest part of the place; here was the forge for such longevity. And when I smelled the gooseberry tarts coming to maturity in the ovens there, I knew the secret of our lasting so long! Aged outbuildings I recall, too, held up by pleached pear trees. Portledge, like Bideford, had its great guns rolled in from the grave of galleons of the Armada. Below the house, avenues of pines with branches all grown to the east led down to the cliffs and the wind that comes in forever from the west. It was good to think how those trees look over the sea to my own on the Maine coast.

Peppercombe, to the south of Portledge, is a quaint name for a valley which goes deep to the very cornerstones of peace. To see the vesper smoke of its chimneys rise in azure columns against the larchwoods, its cottage walls shining like "precious pearl without a spot" under the mountain of the sea—that is to know why men dream of beauty and die for it. The steep road climbs to Fairy

Cross, where at the sign of The Coach and Horses brawny men, good at laying over furrows whether by sea or land, drink and talk of an evening in voices that are flowing amber. They are gentlefolk, though they go in patches, courteous and kindly, believing the best of all men and smiling at life. In them is the meeting place of the two wide fields of peace, the green and the blue, ploughland and the sea. They take their turn at working both; and their labour sits upon them like a benediction. Wise men they were who founded this village where blessed fairy folk had trodden the circle of their rites. The prim proprietress of the inn is gentle, too. On a later trip to Devon she, who pours out ale, loaned my wife and me her prayer book to take to church. Let Puritans ponder that!

But the last place was the best. Clovelly is the topmost jewel in the crown of Devon coast. Guidebooks and notoriety have not dimmed its lustre; many feet have not brushed off its everlasting bloom. Tourists have to leave with nightfall, anyway; there are but two inns; and the Red Lion on the quay smells of fish. Postcards of Clovelly have gone around the earth; but its stairway of a street is forever new. Turner has painted it with his vistas into eternity above its gleaming whiteness; but he has not done it justice. Artists of all waters still try to capture its charm—in vain.

The Hobby Drive, skirting the brink of five-hundred-foot cliffs, is a splendid approach to the place; one sees the cliff of shining cottages at all angles and no bigger than a handkerchief at one's feet. But the finest way to come to it is along the beach at low tide. I first came thus; only I came rather too late after low water for a calm last mile to my journey. I had thought from the heights of Peppercombe that the way was firm, small pebbles. But when I got down I discovered it was loose boulders that rolled treacherously underfoot. But I had made my bed, and I had to lie in it. The thought of what a turned ankle would mean sent gooseflesh down my spine when I raced the tide that was heaving in with startling suddenness; and those perpendicular cliffs lay heavy on my mind. I won the race; but the waves were lapping my knees when I burst, like a Triton, upon the fishermen of Clovelly. I guess I never reached another harbour so gladly. That may be partly why I like Clovelly so.

Still, on my way, before the tide took all my attention, I had a fine time. I picked up a piece of wood, crystallised with salt, from who knows what romantic ship. I passed the flume of Buck's Mill and saw swarthy faces, startling in this land of fair folk, peering down at me. People say hereabouts that the men of Buck's are descended from a handful of Spanish seamen thrown ashore when an

Armada ship broke in two off the coast. At any rate, they have their own lingo, and their nocturnal ways are not the ways of Devon folk. More lights than those in the lighthouses here have burned on dirty nights, and proud ships, say some, have been picked to the bone when they came to grief by these false beacons. I walked by the place fast. I learned how quicksands grip. And always there went with me on my right hand a great island all one magnificent cliff standing up on the rim of the sea. There was Lundy. Spanish bones bleach under its reefs. Algerian pirates infested it not one hundred years ago. Smugglers love its loneliness still. A British man o' war lies engulfed, with smaller ships, in its shadow. But now it burned all jasper and onyx in the morning sun and looked like a New Jerusalem.

So I came to Clovelly, climbed its protecting arm of quay, and climbed up the ladder of a single street that goes through houses, over houses, and under. Tables aureoled with hungry children's faces were under my feet; brown legs of boys passed over my head. Every stair gave views downward and upward; every stair opened windows into domestic felicity. Climbing "up along," I had a course in the art of living. But I must not try to describe a spot that is so fair that there are not the words for it. Only geraniums are not geraniums till you have seen them between Clovelly cobblestones.

And donkeys are not the little brothers of mankind till you have watched them, saddled with panniers huger than themselves, pass through houses and climb stairs. Even stout lady tourists, for all their bulk a-saddle, cannot spoil *them*. Clovelly children are what Augustine called them; it is the down of angels on their heads. Clovelly men are a sight for tired eyes anywhere; but they are at their lithe best when drying sails, mending tackle, and playing like boys at their eternal work of fussing over play-boats. I should think their wives would get very jealous, for their men make mistresses of those boats.

Clovelly ended my Odyssey. There was nothing to do but pack my bicycle aboard a train and whirl eastward. One loving Devon must not cross the Tamar, ever. For there begins Cornwall, and Cornishmen, if only you could see them outside their breeches—so swear all Devonians—wear tails.

CHILDREN OF CRYSTAL



Children of Crystal

We haven't treated fish fairly in literature or art. Ships we have loved; but the native sons of the sea we have ignored. The old Greeks did something for them, but the Greeks were so everlastingly in love with their own bodies that they couldn't keep them out of anything they handled. It wasn't enough that their gods—who probably were more like butterflies than anything capable of wearing a chiton—should run about amorously in beards or their goddesses lounge like ladies ready for a swim; their gentlemen fish had to have heads and shoulders at least and blow on conch shells, and their lady fish were all ladies above the waistline. To be sure, there were the dolphins. But I am sure none of the porpoises I have known would recognize themselves in that Santa Claus masquerading as a fish that curvets around the amphora. Why, the Greeks made the very waves of the sea so even and well-behaved that you would think you

were sailing over an uncoiling ribbon. No, the Greeks were not poets enough.

Later on, in the misty beginnings of the Middle Ages, when folks farther north and more religious began to do some thinking, they had their Fisher King; and the creature of fins began to float through their minds like God. The sacred fish swam out of the letters of Christ's name. But the dim symbol perished; men forgot the children of crystal, the beauty that moves in the sea.

Think what the poets and the artists have done for the animals of this earth! and the birds! Unicorns, phoenixes, the lamb, the dove, the eagle, the lion, the griffen, the falcon, even the goat. There is not one of them but has furnished forth a fable or stocked a hundred books with beauty. The lovers in the *Song of Songs* run to one another as kids skipping upon the hills. Bulls with wings held up Assyria and her walls. The emerald mystery of a cat's eyes shone in Egyptian temples. The wolf presided over cradled Rome. The horse, married to man's body, gallops around the Parthenon frieze. Lovers spoke in the voices of falcons in the Middle Ages. No nation but has its beginnings interwoven with the beauty of beasts and birds. No tribe or clan so great or so small the world over but has been proud to claim

an ancestry in the bear, the hawk, the swan. I will not speak of the flowers. The rose has been in the heart of every poet who ever sang. The *Roman de la Rose* has the best of the Middle Ages pressed like faded petals between the pages of its allegory. One should not speak of the rose, for one would never have done. . . . The animals alone have provided fables to keep one reading up to the edge of the grave. Æsop and La Fontaine. But where is the Æsop of the creatures in the sea? Only one of all the hardy prophets ventured into the deep; and him we laugh at. Jonah is a jest to us. The Creator did not jest when He sang to Job of the beauty of Leviathan. No animal so ugly or deformed, pig or donkey, but a child or a poet—who is of course a child grown tall—has loved to put himself into that animal's body. But where is the poet or the child to take upon himself the agile frame of the fish? What songs have we made in old ocean, mother of songs? Civilizations have been summed up in a fox. Love we have loosed on the hooves of the goat that smells foully. What lover has dared to dream of the pure love in the sea? Flowers in their pollination are not cleaner in courtship than the fish.

Of all the animals which have been the delight of poets the sheep on our hills have filled the most pages. The books of fleece are legion. Kings began as shepherds.

God is the Shepherd of all His children. Peace is another name for sheep. And, as if that were not enough, lovers have lived among sheep. Theocritus and Virgil, Spenser and Milton—the greatest singers of them all have handled the crook. The shepherd has marked with his name a whole body of poetry. But who has dared to pipe the wider pastures of the sea? Who has probed the deeper peace of the ocean? Where are the pastorals of the sea? The creatures that graze on the herbage of dry land are as nothing to the patient, great-eyed grazers below the tides. A million living things as beautiful as stars are feeding under crystal at our feet, and we have eyes only for stupid and dirty bundles of wool clumsily nibbling at the grass! We have sung of slow and ungainly creatures, and all the time things swift as light were before our eyes. Creatures like rainbows in the flood, and we have talked of drab things! What are the pearls of sheep to the pearls in a herring's eyes? Homer could find no better description for the eyes of the Queen of Heaven than the eyes of the ox. What if he had noticed those of the cod—each with a dim little moon at the heart of its glory?

There is no fairness in us. Our New York poets ought all of them to spend the greater part of their time at the Battery. Yet whenever I am at the Aquarium, I see

nobody but tired bond-salesmen there, or greedy little boys, gazing into the crystal. There was never so much dim loveliness in the moon, and here is no singer to see it. The sun is a slag heap to the fires that burn on these suits of armour, and no artist to paint it.

Once, and only once, we were nigh to giving the sea creatures their due. That was in seventeenth century England. In that century of songs to Celia and Julia and the Civil War, the thistledown of the Cavalier poets and the thunders of *Paradise Lost* and Oliver's artillery poets for a moment became religious men. And religion is another name for a school of mackerel, beauty and plenty that come mysteriously out of the unknown, ten thousand shining forms that go side by side straight as destiny along the pathless ways of the deep, feeding out of the hand of Him who holds the ocean in the palm of His hand. Did not the Saviour win His first disciples by a shoal of fish? The seventeenth century poets were growing weary of Chloes and Daphnes and silly sheep of the Elizabethans. They were beginning to tire of the everlasting green carpets of correct pastures. So they cast their eyes into the water and remarked the strange, new marvels there. Phineas Fletcher wrote his *Piscatory Eclogues*, replacing stale shepherds with fishermen. And that fiercely fleshly and holy poet John Donne translated

Kit Marlowe's song "Come live with me, and be my love" into a watery setting:

"Come live with me, and be my love,
And we will some new pleasures prove
Of golden sands, and crystal brooks,
With silken lines and silver hooks."

Donne loved all exquisite things, flowers of gold leaf so fine that a breath would destroy them, little insects immortalized and stellified in amber, seals, and new coins; so it was natural that it should be he who first saw the poetry in fish. Water fascinated him; no one has made keener observations upon its magnifying translucency; he has best described the net in calling it "windowy." He saw the pathos in these bright first-born children of God, too. On more than one occasion he speaks of the helplessness and harmlessness of these creatures which are preyed upon by all things treacherously, by men and nets and hawks. He sings of the flies of silk which bewitch their poor wandering eyes.

"Is any kind subject to rape like fish?"

he cries out in a poem,

"Ill unto man they neither do nor wish;
Fishers they kill not, nor with noise awake."

Incidentally, in one of his frequent jeremiads on the ill health of his times Donne declares that men now make the meshes of their nets so small that even tiny fish cannot escape through the windows, so mean have men become. In the older days it was different; the little fellows had a chance. And it is some indication of the dignity with which the poet invests fish that he has the spark of the rebellious human soul pass through fish great and small on its way to Cain, Luther, and Queen Elizabeth—he never finished the work!—in that queer poem the *Progress of the Soul*.

Antique angling, old as man, had at last risen into song. The seventeenth century produced the philosopher of angling, too. It is intriguing and pleasant to conjecture that mayhap Donne, as a solemn sunset preacher, first opened Izaak Walton's eyes to the beauty of fish and fishermen's lore. At any rate, Izaak wrote a life of Donne which is one of the jewels of literature. The men of letters whom everyone would choose to live with and love are few and far between. Not Homer, for one does not feel at home with a god; not Sappho, for it is not good to be too near a fire; Dante least of all, for his eyes would have always the shapes of moving flames in them. No one would dream of living with Shelley or Byron. But Chaucer, surely, since he was fond of ale and was always like a schoolboy when it

came to understanding the sweet pain of love; Shakespeare, perhaps, if one could ever have gotten to know him, and Ben Jonson, who had the knack of knowing all men, couldn't. But, by all means, Izaak Walton. If any man has ever disliked the *Compleat Angler*, he has not dared to say so; he would be more suspect than a man who hated music. In Walton fish had at last found their friend. He is always so gentle that his angling for them does not hurt.

No one has shown the antiquity of the art better. Seth, some say, taught angling to his sons. Small boys ought to take Seth for their patron saint, say I. It was, writes Izaak, counted equal with music and mathematics as worthy of recording and preserving from Noah's Flood. Angling is one of the greatest arts as well as one of the oldest. Did you ever deceive a trout with an artificial fly? Piscator queries of Venator. "A Trout! that is more sharp-sighted than any Hawk you have named and more watchful and timorous than your high-mettled Merlin is bold?" Is there a better description for that shy deer of sweet waters? You who have tried to take those evanescent rainbows from under logs and banks answer me that! And the philosopher goes on piling up his eloquence and his wisdom: "The very sitting by the river's side is not only the quietest and fittest place for contemplation, but will invite an angler to it; and this seems

to be maintained by the learned Peter du Moulin, who, in his discourse of the fulfilling of Prophecies, observes, that when God intended to reveal any future events or high notions to his prophets, he then carried them either to the deserts, or the sea-shore, that having so separated them from amidst the press of people and business, and the cares of the world, he might settle their mind in a quiet repose, and there make them fit for revelation." So the fittest place to lament the lost Sion the Children of Israel found to be by the rivers of Babylon. If weeping is one of the best pleasures we have, it ought to be done by a river's brim.

Nor does Izaak end with philosophy. After wisdom, laughter. He goes on, as all good and gentle souls who have ripened beside still waters do, to tell such fish stories as will make the heart leap up and fears of death and taxes fade away. Some rivers kindle torches; some, being drunk, lead one to laugh oneself to death; others dye sheep vermilion; one, on no less authority than Aristotle's, dances to music; and one, Josephus to witness this time, flows six days a week and rests on the Sabbath! And as for the fish in the rivers!—well, Pliny's two-acre one is no small catch, and the thirty-foot eels of the Ganges aren't to be sniffed at; the Indians build houses out of their bones. Then there is the dolphin that swims faster than an arrow from a bow; there are hog-

fish, dogfish, and parrot-fish; cuttle-fish that angle with a hook and line; the mullet which follows its mate to land to share its death; but the palm goes to the lustful sargus that goes ashore a-wooing the she-goats! Best of all, there is that "Darling of the Sea," the Adonis, "that hurts nothing that hath life, and is at peace with all the numerous inhabitants of that vast watery element; and truly," adds the wise Izaak, "I think most Anglers are so disposed to most of mankind." For the proof of Walton's words, I venture to wager that you will go a long day's journey before you will find a fisherman who turns out a murderer, or a murderer who is fond of fishing. In these days of prison reform, it is strange that no one has thought to provide trout streams for the prison yards.

The best beauty of angling, in Izaak Walton's estimation, is that it is a sport so pleasant that like virtue it is a reward in itself. And poets and fishermen are born, not made: "Angling is somewhat like poetry, men are to be born so." Could it be put simpler? So wisdom.

But that heyday of the finny tribe was all too brief. The seventeenth century before it finished got too heated for angling and wisdom. Poetry turned libertine and ran off with that baggage Politics; and Dryden fumed and slashed, and Bunyan made long faces no fisherman would

ever make as he stitched shoes in prison and meditated on the Slough of Despond.

It is high time somebody did something again for fish. And I, though I could never hope to match the starry fish stories of old Izaak and though great philosophy and I aren't near neighbours, am doing my level best by them.

Where shall one begin? Not with whales. Anyone could start so. Their size has saved them. Anybody can see poetry in those epics of the sea. They alone of all fish have always been celebrated in song. They have even lent themselves to satire, as Jonathan Swift points out in his *Tale of a Tub*. Even though some of the ancestors I have had for my personal use were men mighty in tall whaling ships and rich in the oils of Leviathan, even though I myself have seen a whale or two at middle sea, I shall not have them in my catalogue. They aren't fish, anyway. Their blood runs warm as yours and mine. They are only elephants that took to watery jungles to save their precious skins when obesity came upon them.

I shall begin modestly. The sculpin has never been sung. I think, if I were seeking pathos and *Weltschmerz* in this world, I should find it soonest in the eyes of this poor, ugliest dweller in green shadows. God did not often play practical jokes in those six days which saw the world

finished; but He did in the sculpin. As if horns weren't enough, here are spots like the pard's; and the head is more than the rest of the body. The tail is a mere apology of a tail. No wonder the poor thing growls when you touch him and sets his teeth on edge! No marvel he lives by himself like Alexander Selkirk! Yet Andromache's eyes were not fuller of tears when Hector rode out to his last battle. And those who think this fish has no beauty have never seen him under the water. There his spots blend with the seaweed, and only the miracle of his eyes remains. After all, it is an even chance that God learned the craft of camouflage by this experiment.

Consider the miracle of the shad. I do not mean the miracle of his managing so many bones. Here is no solitary nurser of wrongs like the sculpin. This fish delights to dwell in company, and his tail is great joy upon the starry waters of a Summer's night. No one sets a clock for him; yet as sure as June the silver hosts of shad come up to our northern coasts like returning song. From Florida and the coral palaces of the Caribbees they come, side by side like angels of light. Dante saw something faintly like them in the compact myriads of angels in the Empyrean all yearning upward in straight flight.

Too often one thinks of fish as sad creatures, bereft of sun, bereft of joy. Where is the joy in the air or upon the land to match the glee of the herring school? If there

is solace in companionableness, here is gladness indeed where a million wills fit together into one, every fin, every tail, every scale in place. All the hosts of singing birds that fly in squadroned fellowship are as vanity to this. And one need not dream of the ores of El Dorado when there are fish scales to see. No poet has yet come near to the mystery of light that plays upon these coins minted in the sea. Achilles' shield indeed!

What poet of fairy colours and forms has ever had the presumption to describe the changing, waxing, and waning spots which come and go on the squid? And this fish of ghostly eyes carries the very Cloak of Invisibility with him. He can spread jetty midnight about him in the flash of an eye. He hoards night in his bosom where he swims in the sun. Such children of mystery and magic move in the deep, and our poets have racked their brains trying to create the beauty that walks in darkness and enchantment!

Fragility and mystery, opals and magic—these are but other names for the jellyfish that trails thin ribbons and lace made in the moon as he floats and has floated like a single, essential beating heart of the universe since the cold dawn of life æons and æons ago. Hearts that swelled with hate and contracted with pity in ancient Troy are things of the nursery to this impersonal systole and diastole of the sea.

What brain that dreamt of unicorns and agile, supple strength could create a thing so strong and pliant as the eel? The snake, that early man made always into a god, is a poor and frozen clumsiness beside this lightning that cleaves the waters.

What heart can refuse to surge and sing when a school of porpoises come over the skyline of mid-sea racing like schoolboys to play about a ship, which has something of their gracefulness, though slower and clumsier, something of their will to be free? Out through the side of a wave they burst, all together and all in time, nose to nose and fin to fin. And as they leave the water to ride on the air, sensitive as nerves, rapt as thought their glistening bodies curve and bow, turn and bend until they are flowing music and all harmonious geometric law. You who have stood by the first jump and watched English thoroughbreds take the air in company have seen less of liquid fire and less of exact and nervous loveliness. And they say the sea is joyless!

You who have loved sunbeams slanting through an attic gloom and shadows that move under Summer trees, you who love the rainbow and the clouds, you who have yearned to all that is intangible yet exquisitely nice and delicate, you ought to kneel down in worship before the trout. No sunbeam has stood surer in the gloom, no rainbow has arched more harmoniously in the sky. If

a body is a joy and quickness a glory, if a command over that body to its least extremities and the finest hair points is one of the elements of happiness, then you ought to meditate upon the trout. He lives nigh to the inner rhythms of cosmos, and he is a son of beauty. Naturally Izaak Walton would love him the best.

What are the eyes of Old Testament angels to the eyes of the least fish of all? What are the strings of a harp to the nerves of a minnow? Have you seen the flame that burns in water where the herring play? What are the wings of the hawk to the fins which winnow the waters? . . . One cannot think of the sea things without thinking of God's catechism of Job.

We who love swiftmess because we move so slowly, and grace and splendid and lovely things because we are so awkward and so drab, we it is who ought to love the sea and those living things that are within. For the sea and her children are very worshipful. The sea, so prodigal, so lavish a mother of us all. The Grand Dame Sea, whose other name is Mystery, whose children are like light, whose every move is beauty evermore.

WHOM POETS HAVE NEGLECTED



Whom Poets Have Neglected

Among the articles to be bought for a dime in any ten-cent store, things spawned in myriads by the machines of this age, one does not expect to find poems for sale. Yet any ten-cent store has a whole volume of poetry on one or another of its counters; and you can have the poetry and keep your dime, too. In a house of glass lit by a mysterious lamp from below life swims on wings delicate as Venetian glass, and a universe of living gold burns and churns with the rhythm of sunlight on windy stalks of grain. Fire in the flood! If a lover of colour and movement cannot feel that he is worshipping when he gazes into the aquarium of goldfish, then he has come by his name falsely. Here are the butterflies of the water, the aristocrats of fishdom who, like the lilies that outshine Solomon in his glory, toil not nor spin. The Creator lays gilt on lavishly; but His bargains make the trinkets the machines have turned out look gaudy and pathetic.

But goldfish are creatures as close to us as garden pools; we have invited them in to share our houses with us. They are fish trapped and tamed; they have lost the mystery of great waters. It is the children of freedom in the sea, the beams of light that cleave deep shadows, that our poets ought to celebrate in song. But they have gone gallivanting off to the stars and left the stars of the everlasting twilight below the waves to their ancient silences. Why is it that we can feel a fellowship for the tiger and the moth, and yet remain cold and passive to the beauty of things spotted and striped as no creature that lives on air ever was, the moths and tigers of the sea? Our sympathy stops at the crest of the waves. Mystery and horror we can see below; we people the glooms there with monsters such as our ancestor Beowulf fought; we applaud the cruelty of Beowulf and his friends when they transfix with spears a tenant of the flood—probably an innocent seal. But our love never plumbs the depths. We make friends of the carrion eagle and the raven; we make banners and myths and poems in their honour. But the ocean has billions of harmless grazers, lovely and light as dreams; and for them we make no songs.

Surely we who sit at the feet of Sophocles and Shakespeare ought to feel the tragedy which is the skate! This creature is the tragic mask entire leering forever open-eyed at the tyranny of life. Its mouth forever to the

mud turns down at the corners in the archaic curve of unutterable woe. Food may enter in there; but one knows that its taste is bitter and its strength a mockery. Thorns and barbs are becoming to its skin, for the thorns go through its soul. It has pondered its wrongs in its brain until it has grown all to head, with its fins no more than facial appendages like Victorian side-whiskers and its nether parts shrunk to a mere rudder. It is pathos pure and whole. Yet no poet has written of this creeping pain, this Tristram of the tide.

Go to the other pole of the universe, the herring school that is all flying arrows and silver joy unleashed, and no poet has touched here upon this wonder, either. Yet seeing a school of herring one can clearly understand what Lucretius dimly meant by his phrase "coasts of light." Life and vigour move compactly here like a white continent cut loose from its moorings and adventuring out across an interstellar space. And every last shining will, every individual shape of gladness that drinks in life more deeply the faster it breathes and swims, fits its symmetry into the symmetry of the whole school. Here one might learn the beauty of law in these paths patterned after the parallels of flowing light. Geometry and life have kissed here. Greek vases have no surer artistry than these separate shapes in this avalanche of life. Sing of antelopes and young deer that leave only exact and

sharp outlines of their hooves on the dewy grass, if you will; but do not compare such slow and clumsy creatures to the herring that thrill across the ocean like early sunbeams. Make much of the majesty of a company of great ships moving side by side towards a haven; but do not shame these millions of living craft keeping exactest intervals by likening such dead and few ships to the progress of herring that seems like destiny.

The whole cycle of wonder that is life is to be seen in the smelts. In babyhood they are miracles of translucency; of the crystal that they are one can see only their eyes. Eyes, and a thin thread that might be a spine. In emerald glooms they are emerald; in amber, sunlit water they are amber. The light passes through them undimmed, undistorted, as the thoughts of God, as Wordsworth would have us believe, shine purely through the minds of children. They are all eyes, and they drink in the light they have been born into with burning innocence. Later on they take upon themselves the dignity of a body so pure a silver that it puts the April moon out of countenance. Then the urgency of passing on the lamp of life lifts them out of the sea and up along the streams of sweet water. Slim bodies flash white in March moonlight; fins turn to wings to carry them up rocky waterfalls from pool to pool. Whoever has taken them in dipnets in this season of spawning has taken poems out of water, white

arrows of creation clean and swift from the quiver of God. Autumn completes the cycle; the smelts move up tidal creeks in solid shoals to give up their bodies to the nets that other cycles of life may be complete and that new disciples may be won to faith in the Father of life by new miracles of bursting nets.

Do not call these creatures children of darkness, for they love light with a love that overcomes the timidity that is built into the very vibrations of their hearts. Hold a lantern at the water's edge, and the water will be peopled at once with creatures with jewels for eyes drinking in the light, bathing their bodies in the fountain of life. Do we in our worship abandon ourselves so completely to a light which we cannot understand but know by its very beauty to be good? No dreamer who has filled the greenwood with fairies has dared to dream of the iridescence and fragility, the delicacy and grace of line that are here. One might be gazing into another universe where rainbows and vases too fragile to handle consorted with *nebulæ* and wandering stars.

Even the tiniest and drabbest of the sons of ocean have the grace that we grope for in the dance. Gray sticklebacks go through life with harmony pulsing in their fins. It is the water that slows down action to a music of muscles and nerves. Movement is regulated like a heart throb; these creatures could not be ungainly in their slowest

turnings. Blunt-headed chubs swim through sunshot waves like notes in a minuet. Even the anchored fish, tenants of rocks and shells, have their share of gracefulness. Look down the face of a ledge as the tide floods; a thousand little sliding doors roll back, and out come ten thousand feathery fingers that comb the water for food. There is no lacework so delicate, no fern fronds so exquisite as to compare with these hands that move together on the housetops of the barnacles. That master of fragile art, the Jeweller Frost, could never hammer out stars so thin or flower fronds so airy and fine, so like the leafage of a dream.

These are the children of the Creator whom the poets have neglected. They are our cousins far removed; they are the country relatives we left behind us in the old manor house of the sea when we packed up our belongings ages ago and went up into the cities of air. We ought not to be cold to country cousins. Sometimes such relatives seem to live closer to the rhythm of the circling seasons and the rhythm of the marching stars. What if the fish, being nearer to the star-dust from which all life came, should be the keys to unlock the beauty of the universe? Surely their bodies hold a symmetry we have lost under the buffets of the air, a splendid colour that has faded from our bodies in the light of the sun.

THE CHÂTEAU OF THE STARVED



The Chateau of the Starved

The pinnacles of the place had always lain on the skyline of my sleep as a boy. The two flanking square towers stood up stern and dreadful as the angels out of the Apocalypse, which my aunt, who had a partiality for the warmer portions of Scripture, made me read over and over. I could imagine that it was some terrible sin among the people below the hill that made those guardians stand there with their long wings folded. The tower in the middle wore a crown which shone pure gold in the sun. The sky showed through openings below like eyes. It was like a head bowed above the pines. God, I thought, must look like that. I knew the great house was somehow connected with the stern people of the Bible, patriarchs and angels of the Old Testament sort, the kind that stand

on turning wheels with four wings full of eyes. The whole structure was alive with burning, awful eyes instead of windows when the sun was low in the west.

So I always took my trout with trepidation from the streams under the folded hills which that house kept ward above. The biggest fish could not tempt me too close under the walls. I should have known the mysterious thing called religion kept house in such a building, even had I not seen the Bethelites coming down into the world from their hill, two by two like the apostles; even if I had not heard the neighbours speak of the grim religion that flourished up there. For Bethel *looked* like religion. It was on a hill; it rose above life. It had the dawn first and the sunset last. It was towers and silence. The people who came down from it had eyes that saw past the elms and fields, saw something beyond them all, something that plain farmers and everyday folk could not see. Something the colour of fire, for their eyes reflected flames. If ever all the things I read about in *Revelation* were to come to pass, I knew where I should look first for the angel with the trumpet. His feet would be on the towers of Bethel.

The years have changed the Bethel that I knew. The thousand men and women who renounced the world's ways and climbed up its stairways seeking peace have scattered to the four winds. Its white gospel of the

Coming of the Kingdom has gone with the last year's snow. But deeper than these material signs of Change is the change in my own way of looking at it. Once it was trumpets and prophecy, a place of mystery and terror, a high house of awe; to-day it is a house of pathos, the grandeur of hunger, the Château of the Starved. I know, now, what went on there in those turrets the dawn visits first and the evening last. Not the fearful physical torture that rumour whispered. Not the mysterious rites my boy's eyes saw shining at its windows. It was the feasting of famished souls upon a mockery of bread. The founder, a man who fancied himself the reincarnation of Elijah, was not another patriarch with handmaidens to serve his body, as malice had it, from the women of the colony. He was not a cross between Bluebeard and David. He was a good man, but a starved one; and he never found the bread he craved. Time has tarnished his halo of imagined greatness. He was only an earnest country schoolteacher who feared God so deeply that he thought at last he had seen the vision. He had wanted a vision—God alone will ever know how badly. He was a plain man; so had Elijah been. He was as deadly serious as any prophet that had ever cried out upon an unbelieving age. His age—our age—was rich in things and poor in faith and vision. Why then was not he the man to bring again the Word? But he was a small man. There lay the

tragedy. And the vision, after all, probably never shone save in his own small brain. But his hunger was real. His faith in such light as he had was as thoroughly granite as his own hills. So there came a day when he put the dog-eared books away into the ink-stained desk, quitted the schoolroom that was bleak as Providence, and went out to the voices in his brain and the Kingdom of Heaven that he thought lay at hand.

The people who followed the founder up the hill to the tabernacle were hungry, too. They came from lonely farms or the submerged class of the towns, from unpainted farmhouses or dingy tenements. Drabness they had known and years and walls gray and gray to everlasting. Life had been work, work, bread-and-butter, and work. The churches they had known were bare places, the religion preached there argumentative, utilitarian, dull; often there had been no churches at all. Art had never put wings upon their days. Good books had been sealed to them. Fervour and exhilaration had never transfigured them. They had lacked an emotional outlet. No wonder their souls had grown unlovely, like grasses under a stone, misshapen, thin, starved for sunlight. In their hunger they turned to the false light as to the light of salvation. And they went up the hill to Bethel's house of a thousand windows flaming in the sunset.

The Château of the Starved! This Summer I saw it

again. White above the Androscoggin, above tier on tier of pines it holds the highest place for miles around. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills." . . . And to make the mockery complete the land westward rolls in fold on fold of blue and fertile hills away toward the White Mountains. Valleys singing with fatness, timothy, corn, and apples; little white farmhouses with green blinds; gigantic barns greater than châteaux along the Loire. Best of all, the milk and honey of kindly and contented men and women, sturdy Maine folks with eyes nearest the cornflower hue of any on this earth and hearts as open and fragrant as their sunflowers. Beauty, too, everywhere; elms to spread it aloft grander than cathedral arches, sweet-peas to keep it small enough to take indoors. Somehow, these Bethelites had missed it all. They had hungered in the midst of plenty; they had lacked the power of poetry or philosophy, and so had not been able to translate green beauty into spiritual pastures. They had shut their eyes to the angels that are New England elms, wings poised for flight. Because the religion they had known had been bleak and forbidding, they had gone up to seek another as barren and aloof. Mockery led them to the only sand waste for miles. They built their tabernacle on the hungry hilltop, high and aloof above the comfortable farmhouses of Exeham Village. In a waste place they sat down to feast upon themselves.

Even then, if they had had eyes to see the sunsets, they might have been redeemed. But they gazed inward and devoured emptiness.

I had never been right up to the Castle of the Holy Ghost before. Trust a boy to keep well away from a place where angels with eyes all over themselves might meet him! Now, as I came up, step by step I saw the glory vanish and the aureoles fall off that house of enchantment. The paint had gone; the cheap carpentry was exposed, cracks yawned; the fake stone battlements were sagging awry. The towers were wooden shams through and through. Scavengers of junk had stripped most of the copper plate from the diadem that used to turn the central cupola into the golden crown of my boyhood dreams; jagged patches remained. The long flight of steps, when I came to it at last, was fallen into ruin. I had to pick my way. So I came up to the doorway that has in great capitals above it the words *THE TRUTH*: Pilate inquired after such a door. To the left was the door marked *PRAISE*, to the right *PEACE*. The iron grillwork was gone from the door called *PEACE*. The two angels that blow their trumpets over the port of *PRAISE* turned out to be cheap things, brazenly imitating stone; they were cracked and worse for weather, and, worst of all, they were just the usual sort of angels. So passed my dim, fierce angels of the Apocalypse!

I ascended to the door of TRUTH and lifted the knocker. The whole place rolled with echoes that told of emptiness within. No one came. I stood there on the sagging threshold. The half of the world seemed spread out below, gold and blue, hill and dale, houses and forests. Surely the Truth lay down there where men were getting in their hay and women picking their first string-beans. This building was a mockery, and the doorway lied. I knew the colony had been long dispersed, since the falling of its founder into the hands of the federal law for causing the death of a man by his patriarchal discipline; but someone must be about to look after the empty nest of zeal.

I tried the door named PEACE and was answered by silence again. But when I knocked at PRAISE, the hinges whined at last, and a small man with sharp, sad eyes came out to ask me what I wanted. Tourists, said he, as the signs below read, were not welcome. When I told him that I was not an idle sightseer but one who wanted to hear something of the Holy Ghost Colony, he was less blunt but still suspicious. Had all the Bethelites gone? I asked. His five-feet-four reared up to the stature of a patriarch. No, he was one. And he was keeping house until the good days should return and the castle be full of prayer and praise again. Behind him, the gaunt ruin rose, many window panes gone, the two great watch-

towers deserted, the north one where a man on his knees perpetually while the colony prospered had done the sentry duty of prayer and the south where a woman had likewise knelt through all the days and the nights. But there was this one small, brave man on the threshold with flame in his eyes. It made one think of Thermopylæ. The thousand were scattered now; some were in California; some had sunk again into the slough of the world and the mires of sin. The brave white yacht which the Bethelites had used for their pilgrimages to the Holy Land had laid its bones on the mudflats of South Sunport. Yet the hope of the return of the Chosen People from the bitter waters of Babylon, the glory of a restored Jerusalem was concentrated in this man who talked with me on the rotting steps of the tabernacle.

As my sympathy won his confidence, he spoke more and more freely. Words stumbled over words on his tongue. One could tell the years of silence he had known when these words had had to lie unspoken. Bitter words, some of them. The world was a cesspool; churches whited sepulchres and the proud-flesh of Mammon; dancing?—he would as soon jump into the Androscoggin, which ran dark and swift a sheer three hundred feet below us, as to dance! They were mostly words, nothing more; musty, faded words of the professional revivalist, smelling of

ignorance. But poor, pathetic, moth-bitten words that were eloquent of a starved mind. Words! words!—"miching mallecho," as Hamlet, another monomaniac, would cry. But some of them, here and there, were golden words, steel and flame words, wonderful words of life. The world is grown fat; things are too much with us. We need strong, naked, great men again. Like the old martyrs, he said, like Bunyan, like Fox, like the Wesleys—"eagle men!" The pinched face of his little daughter, I took her to be, was peering at us through the pane. We need faith more than we need flying-machines. We need to be washed in the blood that makes whiter than snow. Falcons of words were here, all the more startling for being in the midst of poor tabby and tamed chicken words, the jargon of salvationism.

Narrow and ignorant words. The world is sin to the core. I looked down on the birches white as flames and the firs, Christmas trees for half the world, packed so close that you might walk on their tops. I could smell the sea beyond this glowing valley. A tall man was bringing home a little boy on a wheelbarrow. A Ford car went by with laughter and a plume of guilt where the dust trailed behind. Narrow words. I thought of poor homespun John Bunyan who felt he had sinned mortally in his youth because he had played tunes on the chimes. The uncompromising Bunyans are needed in the world,

perhaps; but our Saviour's first public ministration was a jovial one, at a wedding.

Fanatical words, smoky words. But now and then the first burst through the smoke; and I forgot the shrivelled face and the cracked voice of the speaker; centuries turned back, and I heard Calvin speaking; farther back, and it was a Mediæval ascetic preaching to me. Yet these were the shards of eloquence, pathetic, broken phrases only in a torrent of stock sermonizing. Biblical quotations, cant; but behind it all was a face I shall remember while I live for its pleading eyes that spoke of a mortal need, of hunger that is from everlasting.

From the incoherent eloquence of a small mind I could piece together the homely picture of the real Bethel, so different from the fiery fiction of my young mind. It was an Adventist sect built on the prophets and the apostles, with Christ as its cornerstone and the Bible taken literally as its lamp. Spiritual starvation had led its leader and his lieutenants to the conviction that they were the reborn Elijah, Elisha, and Moses of the Old Testament. They had fashioned themselves after the severe paternalism of their prototypes. Their word was absolute law, and it was this reef on which the colony was finally wrecked. They coerced by the discipline of starvation. Irony! In many ways they tried to reproduce the socialistic doctrines of the Gospels. Converts sur-

rendered all their goods when they entered Bethel; all things were in common. Their existence depended upon a constant stream of new converts bringing in money for food. The male Bethelites were sent out two by two, like the apostles of old, with poor clothes and empty pockets. They preached for their supper and lodging. The colony did nothing much but pray and praise at first, as long as the converted poured in. They believed that all things would come to those that pray. "Prayer," said my friend who preached to me on the steps, "built this house!"—and his gaunt hand swept towards the toppling towers above us. Why, most of the workers knew not one carpenter's tool from another! Beholding their handiwork one could not but agree. Shoddy building, beside the great communal cathedrals of Mediæval France when a religion that was the bread of life for a whole nation flowered into everlasting beauty in arch and mullion, pinnacle and glass of crimson and gold! Miracles, he declared, had been seen again on earth. Always it seemed that prayer had been answered just when the colony was in the most desperate straits. Once an unexpected convert brought money to finish the central tower; another time the wolves were turned away from the door by the gift of a hundred barrels of flour. Because the people did no work to support themselves, these times of crisis were as common as cloudy weather.

There came a day when the false economy crashed to earth. Converts fell off. A hungry horde of beggars threw themselves upon the Winter mercies of the farmers of Exeham at the foot of the hill; they ate the farmers out of house and home. Folks whose happiness had been built on hard work of the New England kind despised these holy grasshoppers who had fiddled and preached all Summer; but the ants gave of their stores. Another year saw a revolution in the colony. They acquired farms; they bent themselves to the attempt of supporting themselves. As a boy, I remember the swarms of gaunt women who descended the hill and stripped the countryside for miles of blueberries and blackberries. "Holy locusts" folks called them. The great castle ceased to house all the Bethelites. Many families lived apart on farms nearby. "But," my preacher assured me, "they ate together at Easter and Christmas," in the bare dining hall that never got plastered; for they saw fit to celebrate as the three kings of the Bible story with good cheer, "with gold, frankincense, and *mirth*." That last misquotation of the Biblical word held volumes of pathos that one could read behind the trite discourse. They had testimonial meetings and Bible classes. One of the Gospel beauties they tried to reproduce was the physical healing by faith. Credulous outsiders were not above using these "Faith Doctors" when all else failed. There was the widow who

called in the "Hill People" to cure her son of insanity. But there were no Gadarene swine to take away the fiends of his madness.

The sun was on the tops of the White Mountains and the world blue with shadows when my host finished in halting phrases the account of the gradual dissolution of the colony. The world and its corruption were to blame. But the glory would return and the lamps to Bethel's windows; he breathed his prophecy passionately into the twilight. He brought me a chair to sit on, with a passage from the Psalm of Charity to justify his ministration to an unbeliever. I sat on it to sketch the really fine wrought-iron work over the door of PRAISE. The little girl came out and stood by my side, and her mother. I had wanted to say something of my own to these cheated creatures; but somehow, sitting there by the house they so passionately guarded, a house of bread that left them empty, I could not say a word. The ruin was their life. Who was I to tear it down? Was I better than they? There is a grandeur in hunger. Who would undertake to make a Greek tragedy into a comedy? *Cedipus* the King was a starving man; the martyrs, too. For all the beauty there is to feed us, we all know hunger in some measure.

I ended my sketching and showed them my work. The man glowed to see the towers he so loved lofty above the

piners and the river. He pointed out the fine strokes to his wife. I do not recall any praise that has delighted me more. We said good-bye and shook hands. The fingers were calloused and seamed that had tried these lonely years to keep abreast of the spreading ruin at work on the house that sunset gilded above us. At the little graveyard at the hill's foot, where, God being merciful, the hungry lie full now, I turned to look again on Bethel. It was onyx and jasper, sardonyx and pearl and crystal; evening had turned it into the heavenly Jerusalem. The boy's romance of the Apocalypse had returned. I thought of the poet who saw his Pearl glorious as the full moon in another August centuries ago marching in the midst of the shining brides of the Lamb.

Stonewalls along my way were lovely for the artistry of homely hands. The crickets had begun their night-long symphony. Lamplight and voices came out to me from windows and doors. Haystacks fragrant and unseen were tabernacles where beauty dwells. But my mind was up in the Château of the Starved where a thousand souls had hungered on the hills of a land flowing with riches. Is there something we have lost forever from our lives? Are the white pinions gone from the shoulders of the world? Perhaps the fierce beauty men knew once, the beauty of fire and hunger, has become only the stuff of a bad dream in rotten wood, the nightmare of Bethel.

Meanwhile we and our world roll along an inconceivably lovely path, among the stars that are singing flames more splendid than any angels that unfolded their awful wings over the ruin of the earth which John the Apostle saw on Patmos.

OAK AND MISTLETOE



Oak and Mistletoe

They were a microcosm of civilization and nothing less. One spread his broad shoulders, with nothing much in the way of a head between, and the other stood on them. The one to dig the earth and seed it, the other to flourish the sword and make the gestures that determine the contours of a national culture. The combination can be seen in Egyptian bas-reliefs. The "fancy man" and the man who sweats to support that luxury. Poet and plodder, earl and churl, Sir Petronel and Piers. And one is as essential to the world as the other. Langland, six hundred years ago in his May dream on Malvern Hills, told us that. The oak and the mistletoe. The man with the pistol and the man with the saw.

But this is the reflection of a grownup. As a boy, I saw only the humour in this partnership of Sim Darroway and Chuck Merriman. The fact that they, men growing

gray, had not shaken off their nicknames as boys gave them away at once as men a little "off." They were that, both of them, but in a way that I can now see had something cosmic in it. They lived together on Pigeon Plains—the town common where the land had been too poor to quarrel about or divide. Wild pigeons had once darkened the sky there; but the birds had gone the way of the buffalo of the West; now there were only stunted pines and bracken that turned scarlet with the early frosts. Chuck had built them a house out of packing boxes toted from town. It was a very small and light house; we succeeded in turning it bottomsides up one night with Chuck—but, ah! not Sim—inside it. It had only one room. The stovepipe did not aspire; it took the easiest way out through a vacant pane in the single window. There was one chair, and Sim always had it when at home; but there was the woodbox for Chuck to squat on. Dishes were few and odd ones, though the cereal bowls one used to excavate from breakfast foods were there. The beds were home-made. Chuck's was little more than a plank upholstered with hay. Sim's had a tick, if a rather dubious one, and it was on the warm side of the stove. Chuck cooked the meals that were cooked, sewed, washed up, fetched the wood and water. Sim thought.

That was the beauty and the simplicity of the arrange-

ment. Here were two men ideally suited to live together. They fitted, like the pieces in the jigsaw puzzles we used to put together as boys. Each enjoyed the part he had to play, and neither ever dreamt even of infringing upon the preserves of the other. Chuck did the work. Sim did the thinking and the talking. The entertaining, too, when there was such to be done. Usually they did not like to have us boys around.

To look at the two of them, you would have said at once that the Lord had been in error when He allotted the two men their rôles. Sim stood six-feet-two, and he had the beard of a Yankee whaler and the muscles of an ox. Chuck was a small-shanked, sawed-off man, and his head dwarfed his shoulders. But the good Lord was right, as usual. For in that big head of Chuck's fluttered about pieces of thoughts no self-respecting hen would ever entertain even at the rapt moment of producing her egg. And Sim's great arms could no more swing an axe than they could fly. So Chuck produced, and Sim consumed and pondered and planned.

Chuck supported the establishment with his bucksaw. Though in the years that I knew him the portable sawing-machine was encroaching upon his domain, he still had a furious lot to do. There were still old ladies enough who wanted their firewood cut symmetrically and by hand as in the days of their fathers. It burned better, it seemed.

Furious is the right word for Chuck's work. I don't think I have ever known another workman who put so much of his pith into his labour. Chuck ran the three miles to town and his cordwood and the three miles back in the evening. It was not much of a run, more like a hound-trot. But it got Chuck to work and back to it right smartly. The spinster he was sawing for had to be up with the roosters. Once he had a leg up on the sawhorse Chuck rose to a sort of poetic frenzy. The sticks just dropped *pit-a-pat*. The sawdust was around his head like an aureole. He was too honest and conscientious a sawyer to do two sticks at once. He might do them unevenly and so lie awake nights with regret. It was a marvel the way he ate through a cord of wood. Then he took as much fierce joy in the piling of the pieces. Just so they had to lie side by side. A variation of an inch in length I wager you would not find in the depth of his tiers. He knew how to pile the smallest limbs so that a grown man could not overturn his completed phalanx. His was an art akin to that of his New England ancestors who laid up small stones into walls that an ox could not push over. Chuck took a joy in his work; it was the red stuff of life to him. No monk bending with his brush and putting gold stars on the inch of heaven behind an uncial through the weeks and the months and the years ever felt labour so close to prayer. I wish many labourers of to-day who

go in for unions and the open shop—or is it the closed?—could see such a man at work. *His* task was monotonous; yet he made it the music of a seraph's wing. He did the same thing year in and year out; yet his eyes had a shining and wonder when the latest stick fell.

Wages this man cared little about. The work was the thing, the thing that kept him bent and sweating till the coming out of the stars. He never bargained beforehand, never demanded more than was given him. The wages Chuck loved best were baked beans. Baked beans needed no cooking. They would carry one through the better part of a week. Two, in fact, and even such an eater as partner Sim. The clients who knew Chuck best gave him the sacred pot hot from Saturday's oven; and Chuck would put it carefully under his arm swaddled in one tail of the rusty Prince Albert he ran in, but hung up when at work. He was off like an arrow. And he would unroll it still piping hot at the shanty and set it in its own steam under the ginger moustache of Sim Darroway. Sim would come out of his musings and fall to with a fork that went deep for the pork in the centre of the beans. Verily, life was good!

Crack-brain, nit-wit, dolt. Call Chuck that if you want to. But I know better now. He was the unnamed and unremembered masons of the pomps of Luxor and the pyramids. He was the serfs that fed the swine on mast

that Thomas might sing of Tristram and Lorriss of the rose of Mediæval love. He was the toiler of the prairie whom Whitman loved. He is the legions that feed me as I write these words. He is the microcosm of the world.

Sim was, too. There he sat dredging for the brownest pork chunks. And tinsel-bearded Tiglath dredged with him, starched-wigged Cheops, and fur-lined Petronel of the manor hall. His gestures were the gestures that kings and priests and poets have made into litanies. He tasted of the fruits of labour. He found them sweet. Verily, life was very good!

The consumer of the establishment had his own sort of work to do. It was a weighty business, too. He went to town every day also; but hours behind Chuck, and with the high sun on his back. He did not tarry to answer the playful who accosted him. He went straight to the Town Hall and the bulletin board where were hung the faces and facts of the criminals wanted by the police over the length and breadth of the land. . . . Charles LeGros, *alias* Sam Wellman, *alias* John Isaacs. Desperate. Fond of female society, smart talker, good mixer. A small bullet mark just under his left ear. Wanted in Tulsa for dynamiting the safe of the First National, killing two night-watchmen, wrecking an express, and selling cocaine. An authority on old coins. Will not be taken easily. Cast in right eye. Always smiling. \$10,000

reward. . . . Sim put it all down, every last item, with the reward written in double size at the end, in the greasy little notebook he always carried in his left hip-pocket. He didn't sketch the face that usually smiles forth from this catalogue of the achievements of the desperate. He couldn't draw. But Sim gazed at the subject with so cold and keen an eye that the face was photographed indelibly upon his brain. When he had finished any new items, and checked the old, then he turned with a more than military precision and went out of the building heedless of the laughter of those who might be watching him, heedless of the craning neck of the postmaster who always tried to bandy words with him, to look for his man upon the streets of my backwater town of three thousand souls.

Sim made it his business to look sharp and long. No by-street shading off into a rutted road was too unpromising, no farmer however innocently his eyes might come out at you over the billows of his beard was too drab a subject for that rapier glance. Sometimes he bothered people. But they were usually the strangers or the very timid. Most men merely waved him a reassuring hand. It was all right, they told him, they hoped he was closing on his man. They smiled at him. Sim did not smile back. This was grim business, this of being an unofficial government detective. No matter how often

he peered into a familiar face, that face might just as well go on expecting to be peered into every fresh morning. Who knew what local nonchalance the hardened criminal in our midst might not amass? Who knew what carelessness and *bonhomie* the guilty might not assume? So Sim peered.

Sim had an eye for other clues than faces, too. He examined footprints. I have often seen him whip out a folding ruler from his pants and measure a footmark in the very Town Hall Square. No one shouted with jubilation. It was one of the common sights of our town. We were proud of it, as we were proud of our four-faced clock on the Town Building whose hands never travelled in unison but had a piquant variation that gave a zest and uncertainty to scholars running schoolwards or matrons with their heads stuck out of the window urging on the town hack, nicknamed the Moving Bedroom, towards the Boston train. Strangers had to get used to Sim's antics. I venture to say that John Nolan, town constable, night and day watchman, chief of fire and police, and overseer of the poor, would have arrested anyone on the spot who had interfered with Sim's measuring.

No less characteristic of the man were his clothes. If Chuck went in the Prince Albert of the drawing-room of yesterday, Sim went more gloriously and farther back.

He wore a blue army overcoat of the vintage of 1790, if not earlier. Anyway, it had a cape made up of many little capes cascading down one over the other. I once saw Sir Lucius O'Trigger wearing just such a coat on the stage. Sim had the weapon to match. He carried somewhere between shirt and trousers a muzzle-loading pistol that might easily have been the young foal of a cannon. It was all of a foot and a half. It had an impressively wicked trigger. Both the coat and the pistol by rights should have been beside the first cradle used to rock the first town baby to sleep in over in the Pejepscot Historical Society's rooms on Back Street. Sim had never been known actually to attempt discharging the firearm. He had no need to. The look of it was enough. Below his coat, Sim wore very modern and poor rubber boots. For deadening his footfalls, the wits declared. Aloft he wore no hat save his hair. That was red and crinkled with danger. His moustache would have been at home on a Viking. It stuck out east and west so far that Sim from the rear looked like some strange and sensitive insect.

Rain or shine, Sim went his rounds. He walked all the streets. He ran all suspicions that darted through his nimble brain to earth. The whole town prayed that some day he might come face to face with some one of those whom he sought. But Sim never had that fortune.

What he would have done, no one may say. He might have turned tail and run to the cover of Chuck's cabin and buried his face in the everlasting beanpot for all one might say. That steel was never tried; the metal of his heart never tested.

Of course, Sim got into trouble. Now and then he commandeered things that might prove useful to him in his pursuits without troubling the owners for their permission. But one had to deal cautiously with him in getting them back. Once an irate citizen stopped Sim and declared that the trousers he was wearing had been hung out on his own clothesline that very morning. Sim said not a word, but began to take them right off on the open street. The citizen had to plead with him to do the thing more gracefully. Sim was full of gestures that grated on the more sober tastes of the town. How Chuck could get on with one so impulsive and cosmic at times was a wonder.

But get on the two did. Sim, late to his duties, returned early from them. He was always ready for Chuck and Chuck's food when evening wheeled around. Then the silence that had been the part of the day's adventure was broken. Sim would become loquacious over his chances of a windfall running into the thousands of dollars. Chuck and he should have a regular mansion to live in, with doodahs dripping from the eaves and

everything. Chuck should hang up the bucksaw for good. They would roll in clover. Sim added and multiplied figures to prove his points. He discoursed of pots at the ends of rainbows. He speared up enormous fragments of pig from the drab pot at hand in his zeal. And all the while Chuck went on poking kindling into the stove and lying low on his belly to keep his eyes free from the smoke that poured from every fissure of the thing. Chuck said nothing, but his eyes said many things. Money to the moneyed, ease to the easy; Chuck knew that the day when the saw droned off to silence would be the day of his doom. His work was his pot of gold, as Sim's dreams were his. No chance for an end to a rainbow. Life was good to them both.

So it was. Good till age had its way with them and brought them, still together, to the doors of the sunset on the western side of the town. In the Poor Farm they are still the partners of old. Their own roof of packing boxes is gone from over their heads. They sleep the drier for that. But Chuck still has his saw, and he still has his wood to run towards. Sim still has new notices of reward to put into his book. Even if he does have to give some hours to the turnips and potatoes of the farm, who knows what bucolic places criminals will get into? A bank robber may find cover in rows of corn. So every row has its possibilities.

They are going downhill to the day when the last entry will be made in the notebook and the ultimate stick sawed. Then, if heaven is very merciful, they will lie nigh to one another in the paupers' field, kindly patterns of the two kinds of people all of us are, and patterns to remember with a smile in after years.

GILT HEELS AND CAPTAINS'
BOOTS



Gilt Heels and Captains' Boots

I have seen this little essay, which I am now undertaking on the Clan of Coffin, coming for years. Ever since my name first began to appear in print up and down this land, I have been getting letters from far-flung relatives asking me if I were descended from our first Coffin, a man who took part in that hegira in the seventeenth century of Englishmen coming to the New World for one reason or another, because they loved adventure, wanted to batten the family purse, needed elbow room for the children teeming in their loins, or found that their opinions religious or political had made the Old Country too warm a place to live in. It is the third name I bear that intrigues these correspondents. Tristram was the pioneer from whom we all derive. Nor do these letter writers stop with the desire to know if I am a twig from that first oak of Nantucket. They want me to help them

follow their own twigs in towards the family trunk. They want me to supply missing links between boughs. A dangerous pastime sometimes, by the way; for missing links at times have turned out to be men who "danced the hornpipe on nothing" or ended their careers in other picturesque if irregular ways. I have even been approached to join in one of those perennial, moonshiny crusades to lay claim to an ancestral estate overseas with plenty of young heirs alive and kicking ready to defend it. The letters bring me all sorts of odd bits of colour from the family album, too; some of them tell of great-uncles who followed the Union Pacific into the Rockies and never returned, of others who got themselves mislaid on Sherman's march to the sea; one, at least, was eaten by West Coast cannibals and one by his own men, after the due and proper procedure of drawing lots, in one of those cast-away interludes that make sea yarns the entertainment for all generations.

They are little documents of human nature, these letters; and I wish I had the time or the secretary to answer them all—or the knowledge. They are meant in the kindest spirit; they are full of a family affection notoriously strong even unto cousins thrice removed. But as they are so many in number and have come from nearly every state in the Union and some foreign lands, I would be hard put to it to respond to them all even

if I had the secretary, the knowledge, and the time. One would be in the case of the man who was chivalrous enough to hold open the door in a department store; he was, at last accounts, still holding.

But something I have felt I must do. So I now propose to set down not any part of a complete skeleton of our genealogy, not the cold history of John's begetting of James and Peter and Ann and the pulpit or bench or breadboard that was the field on which the begotten played his rôle in life, but something here and there of the more colourful members of the family and something of the family background that have lent colour to the histories of two countries. For I do not intend to stop with America but will bridge the sea and touch on Coffins before ever Tristram or Nantucket was heard of. If I do not answer the questions put to me in the letters, I hope I shall do something better. I hope I shall write a very small essay on English and American civilization and on human nature in general, at the same time that I warm the cockles of my many cousins' hearts with glory they can call their own. Our family is really quite a university, like any other, when you come to study it. I wish to suggest some of the courses it offers both in individuals dressed up in their best and in their *négligés*, too. When I write of the Coffin family, I shall be writing history rather than biography, as Thomas

Amory, our best family biographer, so well observes, since there are enough of us scattered over this country in graves and out to form a considerable branch of the human race. How many cousins I had I did not realize until the exigencies of the late War brought together a squad of fledgling artillery officers of our name from New England and New York alone none of whom had ever heard of the other before. It is easy to guess, incidentally, the nickname we enjoyed; we answered the roll as the Undertakers' Squad. Perhaps there is a little bit more iron in our family backbone than in some others' because we have had to bear up under something of a handicap in a name that lays itself open to shafts of such humour in lower schools, wars, and other similar congregations of the childish.

I had better begin with the coat-of-arms. A family to be anything ought to have one of these sheet-anchors to Old World poetry. They are useful as bookplates. We have two. The older is lost in the mists of antiquity: *Argent a Chevron between three Mulletts Sable*. The mullets are comforting, for I like to believe that the Coffins of the first water always have been men in love with the sea, living on it or near it; and mullets would be at home on their arms. The later coat is *Azure three Besants between five Cross-Crosslets Or*. Sometimes there are more bezants; but the idea is the same. At some period

or other the family was important enough in the far-lying West of England to do some coining of the realm on its own; for the bezant was a gold coin of Byzantium in current use in England from the time of the Crusades to that of Edward Third.

We follow the rule of most families by going back to the Norman Conquest. Some exuberant family biographers go even farther back and find traces of Coffin estates near Falaise. But certain it is that the name is French in origin; I have seen it myself in France, if not on a manor house, then over optical shops and the like. And Carolus Coffin was Rector of the University of Paris and wrote Latin hymns for the breviary of 1736. We must have distinguished ourselves early in England. If not at Hastings, then elsewhere; for the Alwington estate in North Devon has been in the family since about that time. Prince in his *Worthies of Devon* in 1701 tells of seeing a deed in the Saxon tongue near the time of William the First fixing the boundaries of Richard Coffin, lord of the manor of Alwington and Cockementon and the Abbot of Tavistock. It is interesting to observe in this same deed that the family was early in keeping an anchor out for squalls; there is an article in the document to the effect that the Coffins might enter the monastery and "*receive the Habit of Religion, whensoever (God so inspiring) they would.*" And a Tavistock monk was

furnished always for the family's use. Prince, always rolling titles unctuously on his tongue through the ponderous folio of his making, *Danmonii Orientales Illustres*, dwells upon the many men of this "most antient Tribe" who wore "Gilded Spurs," from that Sir Richard, Kt., in the days of Henry Second through the Sir Jeffereys, Sir Eliases, Sir Richards, and Sir Williams down to the eighteenth century Sir William of his acquaintance. Gilt heels seem to have run in the family, by Prince's tell. What is more important the name Richard did, too; for from the time of Henry First to Edward Second, a space of over two hundred years, the heir bore always that name. We on this side of the water can say as much for Tristram, for I have heard of few generations in my own line that have been without it. It harks back, I think, to Cornwall and a family that joined us some three generations before we set our canvas to the west. It harks still farther back to the days when legends walked the land, even to that saddest of the knights of Arthur who drew his name from Gioustan, ancient cognomen of Pictish kings. Recent generations of the clan in England have borrowed my name from us and taken it back overseas, for use on their sons. Other names, too, persist, on both sides of the water—John, Peter, James, William, Thomas, Miriam, Ann. Something symbolic, I feel, is to be read in such persistency. Perhaps our names,

like our peculiar noses and our eyes that tilt at the corners, are a sign of a certain twist of nature that is bound not to die out.

However that may be, we have succeeded in keeping a firm grip on our acres and house of Portledge in Devon for over seven hundred years to this very day. Quite a record even for the Old World where family roots strike deeper. Through the vicissitudes of changing kings and crumbling charters, civil wars, disease, and the fine fever of roving, a Coffin has lived in Portledge and looked out upon the sea through his high pines, on Lundy Isle in the morning light set like an amber stone on the waves that come in from the west, on the white stairway where Clovelly climbs the cliffs. A house of seven hundred years! . . . If human beings *do* go through life flaking off bits of their auras of personality, then certainly these walls must be full of the potencies of the men and women of the past and able to mould the temples and the thoughts behind the temples of the tenants of to-day. And if that be so, here is no house but a cathedral, made holy by the rhythm and ritual of births, marriages, and deaths, a solemn baiting place of a family strength that abides.

I wish I could do justice to Portledge. It is on the cliffs. Its pines have most of their branches on the eastern sides, for the Atlantic gales lean against them forever. Gulls

sweep over. The musk of broom tingles in the air. Cock pheasants blow their thin trumpets along the half-mile drive that leads to the house from the stately entrance gate. Outbuildings hoary with age are held up by the gnarled and flowering arms of pleached trees. The house itself is in a hollow to be out of the wind. Ivy half covers it; there are tubs with dwarf trees along its walls. It is flowered about with wild daffodils in the youth of the year. Kingsley has described the place in the *Water Babies*; for it was in such a wilderness of chimneys that Tom got lost. Years before I knew this I counted the book the favourite of my boyhood. I felt a strange sympathy for kindly Sir John in whose eye the martin dropped mud, for the trim lawns and smart keepers of Sir John's estate. I felt I could find my way easily about in this place I had never seen. If that isn't a sign there is such a thing as a family soul, what is it? Kingsley married a daughter of Portledge, and so he speaks with authority when he describes the house in his novel in the terms of Portledge as a village in itself with all the ages of England, Wars of the Roses and Jacobean times, retold in its gables. Portledge is indeed a complete essay in English architecture; honest Norman windows, windows that pass through all the varying shadings of Gothic aspiration until they settle down and return to Jacobean and Caroline common sense. And the wonder of it all

is that the whole effect is one of harmony, as one so often finds in English houses that grow and expand with the spirits and bodies of families through the centuries. Quite the holiest parts of the house, the butteries and kitchens, are fitly enough Norman. Battlements and shot-windows ward the pies and the roasts. From the Saxon and early Norman business of eating, as the English nation grew, so the family grew out into new rooms for the harp and rooms for the business of love-making and art and reading, until all the estates and refinements of civilization were housed under its tiles. As it stands now completed it is, as Amory describes it, a place for falcons and hounds. It is also the place for ladies in stiff dresses and thin fingers good at the harp. Its blazoned ceilings have rung with voices speaking with authority. Lace would be at home here and armour. Its best rooms are like the dining halls of old English colleges; the finer arts of living are gathered there, in music, in portraits, in stained-glass windows admitting the light through the colour of religion. I have seen the Portledge portraits that troop back through lace frills to sterner ruffs of steel. And I like to think I have seen the light and faded blue of my family's eyes in those older eyes and the light and curly hair of my own head on those heads that held themselves high through older, stirring times.

I have walked through the pleasant countryside out-

side the Coffin gates and met ploughmen who gave me, a stranger, their grave good-mornings plucking their forelocks as they did so. I am proud to believe that they saw instinctively in me a present edition of the proprietors whom their ancestors served. Pray God, one be worthy of such courtesy! Through the balms of a Spring day I have walked to the sleeping place of these Devonian Coffins, Alwington Church, where a tablet bears witness to the fact that the Coffins have been rectors' patrons in an almost unbroken line for eight hundred years. The family graves floor the churchyard and the church within. Here our people lie, under snowdrops or pious texts, but with holy living feet going always above them all to give them still the music of life. For graveyards in England are not companionless places; they lie under the congregations of the living. Children play at tag over the mounds; farmers talk of this year's wheat above the tillers whose crops are in. I was walking over the brasses of myself here; the monuments on the walls were set up to the potentialities within me. . . . A place for prayer.

One or two of these English cousins I here set down as representatives of the whole English clan. First, Sir William—Flor. A.D. 1533, R.R. Hen. 8, as heraldry will have it. William was a broth of a man to have in anybody's family. Henry the Eighth had his wits about him for once and showed a power of wisdom in choosing his

men as he never did in picking his women when he made this man Master of his Horse and Gentleman of the Privy Chamber. No man, thought Henry, was better fitted to escort to her coronation Anne Boleyn, the future mother of the great Gloriana. And few men as able to "wait on the King, within doors and without . . . and when the King Eats in his Privy-Chamber . . . bring in the Meat." This younger brother of a plain squire of Devon departed himself also on that most colourful of carpets, the Field of the Cloth of Gold. For, to let Prince relate it, "Of what Courage this Gentleman was, and how expert at Feats of Arms, may be partly collected from this, that he was one of the eighteen Assistants to K. Hen. 8 at the Just or Tournament held, between Him and the French King, before *Guisnes* in *France*, A.D. 1519." Sir William made his mark in other ways. Having acquired the Lady Mannors of Derbyshire to wife and with her the fortune that he needed if he was to carry on in the style to which Henry was accustomed, "residing," as Prince puts it, "as is likely, with her on her Dowry," Sir William got himself made M.P. and went on his way rejoicing Londonwards.

But these matters of a rich wife and a seat in Parliament were but trifles to what William did on his way up to the city. Let Prince tell the tale: "In his way to which, there hapned a remarkable Accident, not un-

worthy the relating, especially for the good Law it occasioned: Passing by a Church-yard, he saw a multitude of People standing Idle; he enquired into the Cause thereof: Who reply'd, *They had brought a Corps thither to be buried; but the Priest refused to do his Office, unless they first delivered him the Poor Man's Cow, the only Quick Goods he left, for a Mortuary.* Sir William sent for the Priest, and required him to do his Office to the Dead: Who peremptorily refused it, unless he had his Mortuary first. Whereupon he caused the Priest to be put into the poor Man's Grave, and Earth to be thrown in, until the obstinate Priest was either altogether, or well nigh Suffocated." It was lucky for Sir William that his royal master was none too staunch a Defender of the Faith. Indeed, the upshot of this same adventure with the priest was a law enacted that year by Parliament rigidly limiting the amount that could be demanded by the church in these death-gifts. So, as Prince has it, "Evil Manners are often the Parent of Good Laws."

It is pleasant to know that this fiery man, when he came to die in 1538, could honour his King by bequeathing to him his best horses and a cast of his best hawks. So our knight passes off the stage with a last knightly gesture.

Anthony à Wood, the seventeenth century antiquarian, first alumni biographer in the world, mentions two

Coffins who were noteworthy among the sons of Oxford. Just a line or two; but one kindles to the brief commentaries on useful lives. The family was not without its learning; Edmund Coffin of Exeter "was an excellent Grecian, and afterwards Schoolmaster of *Saltash* in *Cornwall* for 40 Years; in which time he sent many Scholars to both the Universities, especially this of Oxon." A more useful life, when all is said, than any amount of clinking of golden spurs. Another Devonian, Edward, made his fame in studies in far Rome. Bookish men must have run in the family; for Prince points out with pride that the late seventeenth century lord of Portledge, Sir William again, a man of excellent learning himself, had a large library full of ancient and precious manuscripts. Sadly enough, that collection was largely dispersed near the beginning of the nineteenth century.

That same seventeenth century, so full of upheavals in all English life, was one notably hard even upon the fecundity of the Devonian Coffins. It was a time of scattering, of drawn swords, and sudden death. That the manor lord of Portledge had a quiver full of the arrows of offspring this epitaph of Richard Coffin in Alwington Church can prove:

"All Heer Portray'd Shewes One Joyn'd Coffin; Sent
Through Heavens Canopy, And To Earth Here Lent,

Perfum'd With Vertues And Bedew'd With Grace
T' Adorne Them With A Progeny For A Space;
One Man Tooke Life From Dead Elisha's Bones,
Eight Martial Sonns Liv'd From This Coffins Loynes
With Daughters Seven, From This Vine Did Sprout
Like Olive Plants Their Table Round About.

Thrice Happy Fruitful Coffin May Thy Buds Spring
And To Eternity Haleluiahs Sing."

To attest this fruitfulness the sculptor of the fine marble picture of the whole family was cramped for space. Above are Richard *père* in his flowing Caroline ringlets, Vandyke, and shoulder mail and his wife in a hat not unlike our modern straw sailor and a beatific wooden stare of pride in her achievement above her wide ruff; they clasp hands under a flaming heart. But below, the children have a hard task getting into the frame of the entablature which supports their parents. They are done in doll size; yet all the sons have their Vandykes and look exactly the same, and all the daughters are mature women with headdresses save one, and she, poor thing! had to be crowded into the picture on her side wrapped like a papoose in swaddling clothes. But, then, two of the boys have close quarters, too; they can show only their faces between the shoulders of the six brothers in

front. But, alas, such fecundity was vanity. The melancholy fact is set down that James, the fifth and sole surviving son, reared the memorial in 1651. War had taken the rest. They died for their King in the hot fighting around Bristol and Gloucester perhaps, for Clarendon mentions many neighbours' names among the flowers of Devon that fell in that campaign in which Parliament's lobster-like cuirassiers finally raised havoc with Prince Rupert's Cavalier troopers.

It was the turmoil of the Civil War, too, that gave America Tristram, ancestor of all our clan. Tristram may well have played a part in the campaigns in the West which made his going a wise measure. He sailed from South Devon, where his own branch had been for some generations settled in and about Brixton, in 1642. He took his whole family with him, mother, wife, two sisters, and five children. Tristram pitched his tabernacle first and called the roll of his family on the banks of the Merrimac River. For sixteen years he lived in this region. Here it was that he fell in with Quakers, a sect to which many of his descendants were to belong. Upright, hardy, far-seeing, he seems to have gone from strength to strength, like many another of the strong men who came out to the New England wilderness re-

joicing as strong men to run a race and sowing much vital seed for a new nation.

Certain it is that the end of his long life found him a wealthy man, for the times, owner of a quarter of the island of Nantucket, which he had explored and settled upon in 1659, and Chief Magistrate of the island at the time of his death, 1681. In his day and under his direction largely he had seen a sandy wilderness peopled only by Indians and sea-gulls turn into a vigorous and populous colony; he had made friends with the Indians, paid them for their land, and had enacted for their sakes the first prohibitory liquor law the world has any record of. It had not all been smooth sailing. To judge from some aunts I have had, not to mention myself, there probably has been inherent in the family constitution some degree of "fractiousness" that will not down, something of that Old Adam that spurred Sir William to hurl the priest into the grave. Tristram may well have flown off the handle at times. It is no small job to found a big family and settle a big island right. For one thing, he had to father the Indians, some three thousand of them, all gifted with a thirst for the white man's firewater and ready to fall upon the handful of white settlers. With them, he did not believe in sparing the rod. Court records show that he used the whip often upon Redskins whom their own sagamores could not keep in order. Even with

his white neighbours he may have been high-handed. There is the local doggerel line,

"The Coffins, noisy, fractious, loud."

Twice, at least, the family honour had been in jeopardy. But both times we came off with flying banners. The first occasion was before Tristram left the banks of the Merrimac. It seems his wife, who brewed a good beer and sold it for the solace of people crossing over the river by ferry, was called up for charging threepence a quart instead of the two permitted in her license. This was a ticklish moment. But that worthy lady put her accusers to confusion by proving that she always used six bushels of malt to the hogshead instead of the required four. The brewer who sold her the malt bore witness to this. I hope that the later law prohibiting the sale of beer to the Indians of Nantucket did not grow out of such lavishness as hers! The other time a ship's bones were picked clean on the Nantucket Shoals; Tristram as magistrate gave the sanction for the act. He was raked over the coals by a Court of Admiralty; and the onus of repaying the damages fell upon him alone. But, eventually, as Tristram's own testimony seems to have been the only evidence against him, the Governor of New York, under whose jurisdiction the island was until 1692, forgave him for his willingness to tell the truth even

though his fortune should suffer. And the family honour was saved! Barring these two episodes, the sunlight was steadily upon his days. Sometime before his time came, he divided up his land among his children, reserving the use of it while he lived. He even gave twenty acres apiece to all his grandchildren, "To have and to hold, to plant Indian corn, or to sow or plant any other grain on, and if they or any of them shall sow their land with English hay-seed they shall have liberty to keep four sheep upon every acre during the lifetime of any one that shall so improve the above-named land or any part of it." So finally he laid himself down at the sunset; and his bones lie on the island he had populated. The career of one of the founders of our nation was ended in glory, and his strength returned to the earth. Exactly two hundred years ago the descendants of Tristram then living numbered 1128. Not bad for less than a century's residence! What they number now would take a good mathematician to figure. But I have heard from many of them!

Many of Tristram's children distinguished themselves one way or another. His daughter Mary, turning Quaker at fifty-six, became the religious dictator of Nantucket. She preached sermons a century before Dr. Johnson declared that a woman preaching was like a dog walking on his hind legs, not having much success, but one marvelled that he could do it at all! She did the quarterly

reports. She was the life of the town meetings; and though she was famed for commencing her addresses always with the words, "My husband thinks so and so," she it was who really wore the breeches, and her lights quite put her able husband's into eclipse. Her house always had that inner radiance that comes from the scrubbing-brush; and though she was proud to have Quaker preachers hold forth in her home, she would never let them stand on her fine cane-seat chairs even to address the faithful. Peter, Tristram's eldest, founded a tribe of his own in New Hampshire. He was a lieutenant in King Philip's War and later Chief-Justice of the Supreme Court of New Hampshire. It was his son, known as Tristram the Younger, who in 1654 built or remodelled the Coffin mansion, one of the landmarks of Newbury and the property of the Coffin family for ten generations, as Coffin houses have the habit of being. Repairs to it in the nineteenth century uncovered rich landscape paper of the Stuart days to set off its spacious fireplaces and chimneys. One of Tristram's descendants far removed, Miriam Coffin, got herself made into a novel of whaling days. She it was, I think, who sold smuggled goods to the islanders in the lean years of the Revolution. This makes the second novel we have figured in; for Kingsley has put the English Long Tom Coffin into his *Westward Ho*.

It was only to be expected that Tristram Senior should have settled finally on Nantucket, for his ancestors in Devon had had the sea in their eyes and hearts for centuries. Natural, too, it was that his sons and grandsons should take to the sea for their living and become whalers extraordinary and Quaker princes of the sea. Nantucket, low, wind-bitten, sandy and hungry of soil, with its plain living and homespun faith, was but the pivot of a circle that swept around the earth. It is Tristram's grandsons whom Burke describes in that speech in Parliament which is a part of our history:

"While we follow them among the tumbling mountains of ice, and behold them penetrating into the deepest frozen recesses of Hudson Bay and Davis Strait, while we are looking for them beneath the Arctic Circle, we hear that they have pierced into the opposite region of polar cold; that they are at the antipodes, and engaged under the frozen serpent of the South. Falkland Islands, which seem too remote and too romantic an object for the grasp of national ambition, is but a stage and resting-place for their victorious industry. Nor is the equinoctial heat more discouraging to them than the accumulated winter of both the poles. We learn that while some of them draw the line or strike the harpoon on the coast of Africa, others run the longitude and pursue their gigantic game along the coast of Brazil."

So the sons of Tristram waxed tall and comely in their sea-boots, wheeling out to the world's four corners. The Yankee independence of these whalers became as notorious as their robustness. They travelled far but kept to their simple faith. They put their honesty and their comeliness into great ships. Purity of living and keenness of wit for once seem to have gone hand in hand. Their women made strong mothers. So they increased and multiplied. Some of them grew rich in the world's goods. Their fine, honest houses sprang up all over the island. Of these, the Jethro Coffin House built in 1686 fits into the landscape as few houses are blessed enough to do. Its weatherbeaten gables and low-sweeping eaves, lower on one side than the other, and its chimney that is at once the altar and the mighty prop of the house are all a part of the symphonies of low gray clouds and level seas that wash forever about Nantucket.

If I had to choose one of the descendants of Tristram to represent the whole family in America, I could do no better than choose Sir Isaac Coffin, great-great-grandson of the Nantucket pioneer. Though he was on the wrong side of the Revolution and lived most of his life abroad, his heart was in our country at the last and he made ample amends to our name by his brilliant career, his pride and interest in his family, and his faith in the new country which had set up housekeeping for itself in spite of Sir

Isaac's efforts to keep it a part of England. He had reasons for trying; his father, who had held a high position in England, and his brothers were Tories. Sir Isaac's life reads like a novel. Sprung of a distinguished and wealthy Boston family, educated in the Boston Latin School, whose Classical tongue stood him in good stead for oratorical fire years after in Parliament, he was part and parcel of the British navy at fourteen, and the navy with its traditions of chivalry, levity, and bulldog stubbornness of Blake was in his soul to the end. His mind was cut to fit the sea and its open ways. His line of whaling ancestors saw to that. He rose to the top rapidly under such teachers as Hood and Rodney and Montague; midshipman, commander of a cutter, captain of a seventy-four at twenty-two! He was with those gentlemen in blue, Hood and Rodney, when they smashed Count De Grasse and all his fleet in the West Indies in April, 1782, De Grasse who had bottled up Cornwallis in Yorktown and so had helped to end the Revolution. It was a glorious day's sport. The French captain of the *Cesar* nailed his colours to the mast and died fighting. When his ship was taken, there was not a foot of canvas without a shot-hole. When the gallant count himself struck to Hood, on whose ship Isaac was, he was one of the three men left alive or unhurt on his upper deck. While his

brother John fought the Colonials as a major on land, in South Carolina, brother Isaac helped to annihilate the allies of the Colonials on the sea.

After the War Isaac's career in the navy was still a thing of steady glory. He travelled widely; he handled many ships with such picturesque and British names as the *Avenger*, *Adamant*, *Royal Oak*, *Alligator*, and *Venus*; he hobnobbed with Montague, Rodney, Linsee, and William the Fourth. Much prize money fell into his pockets. He rescued one of his men by jumping into the sea during a gale to his own serious hurt; he crippled himself saving his frigate in a tempest in the Channel. Halifax, Elba, Port Mahon, Magdalen Islands, Lisbon—the far corners of the sea were his baiting places. He even cruised out exploring on the Pacific and left his mark on far Australia in Sir Isaac's Point and Coffin's Bay. He found time in 1791 to stop off in Boston Harbour and sit, on his own ship *Alligator*, for his portrait in epaulets and sword to that Yankee painter who had made quite a stir with his brush. Gilbert Stuart. The portrait hangs now in a house on Beacon Hill. He became a full admiral in 1814. He had been made a baronet in 1804; and he only just missed being made Earl of Magdalen at the close of his life. But, best of all, he had lived the complete life of an English naval officer and lived up to that code

which is one of the most artistic and exacting and convivial of all the codes the world has produced. He had done more; he had helped to shape that code somewhat—even in the matter of picturesque profanity, for Sir Isaac was an artist also in that.

In only one venture was Sir Isaac unsuccessful. In matrimony he drew a rather dubious prize, an English lady said to be given to writing sermons in bed and in other ways religious. Isaac's free-and-easy sea ways did not take either with the lady or her father. His profanity may have been a handicap. He invited all his father-in-law's tenants in to drink the house ale. Admirals sometimes make poor land husbands. After a few years the admiral and his wife agreed to part hawsums with all the amicability in the world. Long afterwards, though, Isaac had her on his heart, for once in a shipwreck, with small hope of rescue, he expressed the wish that she might have his watch. The lady betook herself to Bath, where she made some reputation for herself in after years by wearing a man's round hat, a riding habit cut to the high-water mark, and a vigorous gold-headed cane. No, Sir William of Harry Eighth's time rather outlucked his American kinsman in the matter of wives!

Sir Isaac followed Sir William up to Parliament, though. For some years his oratory adorned the House; but I am afraid he did less in the way of framing bene-

ficent laws than Sir William. I imagine his sense of the convivial was more nearly the thing that adorned him than his legal sense. In a letter he writes of his own speeches with a fine sea flavour:

"I have this winter fired a shot now and then, avoiding close action, as I soon observed, like our Dr. Sewell's Meeting-House in Summer, many members fast asleep during long and tedious harangues, in the House of Commons. I thought at first the sound of my own voice would have alarmed me before such an audience. Having had occasion often to address my ship's company gave a facility at first setting off, so that when blowing hard I did not broach to or get becalmed while delivering my sentiments to the House."

He visited frequently old friends in Boston, "a town I shall ever regard," he says, "as long as my heart is left to beat." His "House ahoy!" often broke the prim propriety of Park Street as he came roistering home in the stilly hours. He was fond of his joke, too. For, on being besought by a noble English dame to supply her with that *rara avis* of comfort in England, a rocking-chair, he had a Boston rocker made for her so short in the runners that when she leaned back, over she went both heels up before an assembled company. It did not matter in the least that the lady's husband had secured Sir Isaac his seat in the House.

Sir Isaac was a great friend of our own Commodore Hull and carried on a lengthy correspondence with him. Always ready to supply American wonders to the natives of England, he sounds our General Dearborn on the subject of terrapins: "As many more as you can pick up in your garden, except the small speckled ones and snappers, will be acceptable. The latter are such determined deserters that no bounty or kind treatment will keep them loyal." He mingles terrapins and affection for his native Boston: "In early life I have seen a large sort with a rough bark resembling those brought by your whalers from the Gallipagos Islands. . . . Sink or swim I never can forget the place of my nativity or cease to wish prosperity to it." But the thing he had set his heart on most was a lobster. He wanted Hull to send him over one of those crustaceans which are the glory of our coasts and our tables. Again and again he writes the commodore, baiting him with naval advice and old charts of Boston Harbour and maps of old Massachusetts. The letters take on an elegiac tone: "Long, very long, have I been expecting the huge Lobster you were so kind as to promise me. 'Better late than never.'" And again, a year later: "My reputation will sink to the lowest ebb, unless your efforts are crowned with success relating to the Lobster. . . . I lament the situation I hold prevents me paying you a visit this Spring, as my Spirits

were never better, and the *Gout not within hail*." He tries even song to hurry up the matter: "There is an old sea song I used to sing when creeping in Boston Bay during the Revolutionary War, in the months of January and February, 'What cannot be cured must be endured.' Many thanks for your kind exertions. Send the Lobster when you can. My reputation will be saved, though my money is gone." Finally he got the crustacean, and quite a large one. He writes that it made a marvellous sensation in England and some showmen had offered him a large sum for it; "But," writes he, "I decline parting with him, intending it for a Lady's Museum." Yet in spite of the fact that the lobster had given him a chance to act the gallant to a lady, Sir Isaac is still disappointed. He had wanted one weighing ninety pounds! And he asks his friend Hull to be on the lookout for such a one and sends directions to "boil it in strong pickle or brine." Perhaps the admiral had gotten his reputation for veracity arraigned by a fish story such as admirals have been known to tell! At any rate, it is pleasant reading, this correspondence of a British admiral and our 1812 hero Commodore Hull over a lobster. It takes human touches like these to make history interesting.

But the most human thing about this British officer was the pride he took in his family and his fellow Ameri-

cans overseas. He was quick to resent a slur on Yankee fighting ability, and on no less an occasion than a dinner party at the Duke of Wellington's house he told a British blowhard that if the *Shannon* had fallen in with the frigate *Constitution* instead of the unprepared *Chesapeake*, there would have been no Tower cannon booming out a *Shannon* victory. Another time he seems to have been proud of a cropping out of the Old Adam of Sir William, who threw the priest into the grave, in a kinsman from Nantucket. This kinsman was a Yankee mate haled before Sir Isaac because while in a British port he had taken one of H. M. S.'s officers, who had called him a Yankee lubber for not showing proper respect, by the collar and the slack of the pants and thrown him into the sea. The admiral did his best to get the Nantucketer to apologize; he even sent for him to come and be wined at his house. The admiral also took great gusto in relating, with the profanity that was as much a part of him as his queue, the answer his Yankee relative sent back to him. He declared he'd see him d—d first, before he'd drink with any d—d Englisher, especially one who would approve of an insult to an officer under his own flag, upon his own deck. Although he had been damned along with the soused officer, the admiral had only pride in this show of independence in one of the family.

The last act of Sir Isaac is his best monument. As early as 1817 he had begun to negotiate with American relatives to establish an endowment for the education of youthful American descendants of Tristram and others in the ways of the sea that was so much a part of his own blood. Like Sir William, he desired to make good bequests. He had made his will in which he devoted the larger part of his fortune to the plan. It was a very glorious plan indeed. There were to be three nautical schools conducted by able masters: one at Nantucket, one at Newburyport, one at Boston, each to be called "Sir Isaac Coffin's School." Each school was to have twelve scholars, male descendants of Tristram, or boys descended through female lines willing to take the name of Coffin. Poverty and probity were to be the trustees' guides in selecting twelve more scholars at large at each town, each to be free of bodily deformity and certified by a surgeon as in "bodily health, fit for the life of a Sailor," through with the smallpox, or properly vaccinated, at least fourteen years old, competent in Arithmetic and Christianity, scholars in the Classics preferred. If that is not a wise catalogue of virtues, I don't know where to find one. All of Cecil Rhodes' requirements and more. Worthiness, poverty, physical sufficiency, Christianity, vaccination, Arithmetic, and the Classics! What

a foundation for future captains of ships! These boys were to be boarded and trained in very exact ways. Sir Isaac is very specific, even to the anchor they are to wear on their caps, the blue knit stockings that are to go with their blue breeches, the rice, Indian meal, with milk and molasses or sugar, they are to eat for breakfast and supper, and the unearthly hour of five they are to be at their lessons in the morning. He is very catholic in the things they are to learn: cricket, football, wrestling, swimming, caulking, rope-making, ship-building, baking, tailoring, knitting, the mixing of paints, cooking, butchering, salting and smoking of meats, and marksmanship, among others! They are to have a ship their last two years and—what is more—handle it; in this floating academy they are not only to learn to manage craft but also to do valuable research, for instance, discover by dredging the oyster-beds Sir Isaac is sure are to be discovered between Montauk Point and Sandy Hook. When the boys come to graduate they are to bear away prizes in order of merit; the first, a silver medal with "God is my Guide"; the second, a sextant; the third, a quadrant; fourth, a case of mathematical instruments; fifth, a treatise on navigation; sixth, the book *A Coasting Pilot* or a good substitute; seventh, a fishing-line of sixty fathoms with lead and six cod-hooks; eighth, a chest of clothes; the ninth, a pair of compasses. The others are

all to have jack-knives. And every boy to go forth to his life's work on the sea with a Bible and a certificate of his education. We may smile at Sir Isaac's items; but if he had had his way, our country would have had a merchant marine in this year of our Lord 1929!

Generous, wise Sir Isaac!—his dream cost him, rumour has said, an earldom. The nautical schools were started; the ship *Clio* was chartered with Captain Hector Coffin in command of the infant sea-captains. But expenses ran up out of all proportion. And tongues began to wag in England calling attention to a British admiral's benefactions to a nation not his own. Sir Isaac became unpopular, even, in shame be it said, with his own brother, now General John, who writes in a letter of 1830: "Were the American people any way behind those of Great Britain in nautical tactics, he might gain some applause. But I am very sure every well thinking man with you must condemn him for deserting the country that has conferred on him even more than he had any right to expect or look for." Here is a despicably narrow mind in the same family to set over against the big heart of Sir Isaac. The admiral had to give up his dream; but I am very sure that it was from a lack of funds and not from any desire to be popular in England or win any d—d earldom, as he might himself have put it, in Christendom. But a monument of this scholastic and en-

during sort he was bound to have. And so, after one of his trips to Nantucket, noting the "deplorable condition" scholastically of some of his kinsmen, he established the Coffin School, on the Lancasterian model, in May, 1827. There, under the portrait of their benefactor and in the name of Tristram, the children of an island whose most energetic spirits have long since gone away to help build up a nation have had their eyes opened to the light that does not fail. The old Nantucket houses and traditions pass away; but the monument that Isaac built stands firm while there are young minds to learn. So, when he came to die in 1839, he had his memorial after all in the land and among the kinsmen he loved.

I could recommend no worthier model to all the many far sons and daughters of Tristram, my kinsfolk. So, with this recommendation, I end this letter to them all. I have only to add that, in 1881, there was the family reunion on the two-hundredth anniversary of Tristram's death. The family swarmed on Nantucket by legions. The New Bedford Brass Band was there; there were brass bands galore. That author whom all boys who love our history must love, Charles Carleton Coffin, gave an oration. The inevitable poem was read by another man of Tristram's name. There were speeches and speeches. But the crown of the conclave was one of those clambakes

such as run in our family with lobsters martyred in all styles and fish chowdered, baked, and fried. No poems, orations, anthems written for the occasion, or Smith's Quadrille Band could dim the radiance of that repast. A hundred years from now let us meet so again!

THE SUFFICIENT STREET



The Sufficient Street

When I was new to the ancient glory of Oxford and went about the Oxonian streets in the pin-feather wings of the Commoner's gown, I fancied that I had found the complete street to live on. It was the Turl. It ran down from my college gateway that will never be opened again until some belated and over-looked Pretender who wears the Stuart plaid takes the throne of England. Over it were the gables of Lincoln that the moon knew how to silver, high spires floating in air, Sir Christopher's at St. Martin's and All Saints, Exeter's, things to lift up the mind. It was here on my bicycle that I ran down my first don, a Venerable Bede in the flesh, and bought my first rowing shorts. This street had everything apparently. You could clothe yourself out of its shops for tea and scones, for roast beef, for the river; you could feed yourself on everything from toffee to Brussels

sprouts, wine yourself on Portugal or France, make yourself ruddy with the ale of England; you could buy your prints and photographs here, your silver and your linen, your crockery and curtains; you could burrow into old books as deeply as old Burton against the melancholy of the years. Tobaccos were here; Egypt come to wed Virginia. You could even buy tickets for the four quarters of the world; though there would really be little call for such since you could live on this street without ever going off it all the days of your life. Learning was perpetually here; there were gowns of all sorts flying in the wind, and there were three college fronts and the back of a fourth. Beauty was here; there were trees in gardens, flowers on vendors' barrows and on their own stalks; honey-bees flowing like amber beads over the leads of Jesus. You could pass from the cradle to the grave; baptized, knee-breeched, schooled, tutored, wed, read; you could go for your burying to the church that closed the end of the vista of the Turl. A street sufficient indeed!

Yet, now that I am home again and older, I have come to put my faith in another thoroughfare as the one on which a person could live all his days and find complete happiness. It is one of the last of the "ribbon-roads" of my part of Maine. If you do not know what a "ribbon-road" is, then I may say that it is a track carved out by

old-fashioned wheels which had a horse to pull them, a peripatetic road that took to new pastures as the turf wore through to deep sand, a road, too, that went off every little while into acute angles to pay a visit on some pleasant place, or to tarry as long as might be in the shade of pines. Between the paths for the wheels and the middle way for the horse sweet white-clover grew so high that it brushed against the buggy bottom. Because the three ruts were deep, driving ceased to be a matter for intelligence; one drifted with the laziness of the road, sang to oneself, put an arm around a sweetheart, listened to the evening's thrush, or basked without any mental occupation at all. The road carried even the horse along. There are mighty few of such roads left to-day. The automobile, which must get to places swiftly and go there straight, has dried up these genial water-brooks of the soul.

But one "ribbon-road" there is left, and it is long enough and rich enough with the matters that mean salvation to do for a lifetime. It has, to begin with, the sole surviving corner-grocery in my parts, a place where ploughs consort with needles and ice cream with kerosene and, better still, young minds with older ones and country-bred people with citified. People still talk here, as they used to talk before newspapers and radios had made readers and listeners of us all. They chew, too—the male

talkers—the dark plugs their fathers bit into before them. The women-folks come also and with their gossip add thistledown to the stouter talk. There are horsehair sofas to sit on whose springs have come to conform to the anatomies of the individual sitters. Each worn depression is dedicate to the base of a particular patron and purveyor of weather wisdom and the nuggets of experience. No one dares usurp the place of another. Each man has his times and seasons, as regular as sunrise and sunset. Most of the men still wear wide moustaches that curl and become sentient when conviviality is in the air; and the minds of their wearers have something remaining of the elemental sureness and rightness of minds that have found their place in a spot the Creator has fitted out with sunlight and nightfall and dew, something rich and redolent as red-clover, and something inevitably dignified such as one finds in the minds of Old World yeomen and peasants who grow old with their own hedges and trees. Don't ask me what they talk about. There is enough that is vital left in the world—a man's pride in the powerful big things he can pick up in his two hands and carry, Mr. Snow's belted Holsteins, the mackerel sky that will never leave the land panting long for rain, the smart things a man's two-year-old son can do and say, the firmness of corn ears that are beginning to fill out at last. Age can still teach

youth in such a place, and simplicity prescribe for the nervous complexities of machined life. People who "stay put" thus are the people we need in the civilization our mobility has threatened.

Whenever life seems at odds and ends, I like to think of a silhouette one can see at every sunset on my road. A tall man with the beard of a prophet hoeing his corn as he has hoed it for eighty years and more. He will stop and look at a smart new motor car, but he turns unimpressed back to his rhythmic business that has a force more eloquent than the energy of any unleashed engine, a cosmic, slow, deliberate force like the march of the stars. His lustihood Whitman would have loved; it flowers still in old age and makes him a glory on the horizon. From sunrise he works into the blue of the twilight, his shadow like a monument to peace lengthening out eastward until it lies across the whole land. Poetry is of the texture of that shadow. The machines only change; the things that are vital abide.

No road would be complete without glimpses of the sea. Mine has them all along. Every so often the way goes up on a hill where you can see over meadow grass and far elms the water that is blue by sunlight and silver in the moon. The fragrance of salt water is blent with May apple blossoms and August pines. Sails shine by day, lighthouses flicker like candles in the night. The winds

bring the sound of surf, and the fogs turn all the landscape into white and gray lace.

There is the poetry, too, of small and sweet waters. My road crosses brooks again and again. One of them—which I will not say, for I wish to keep it to myself—harbours such rainbow-trout as usually get away to remain the visions beautiful to lure one on through life. I keep these fish ignorant of the adulteries of curious flies and such like gear; plain angling worms of the sort one digs behind a cupolaed barn are all I feed them. And I come home only at twilight, so that my neighbours may not see the spotted makings of a supper too good for sinful man. This brook is the same one I fished in as a boy; and I do not know of a better recipe for keeping young than fishing the same brook you fished in knee pants. Trout are not the only lure of the stream; there are cat-nine-tails, which all New England houses must have in the jar on the shelf in the side hall; azure Devil-darning-needles, which aunts used to tell us would sew up the mouths of children who told lies and which I stand half in fear of to this day; there are swallows flicking still ponds with their dusky wings; parasols of elderberry blossoms; the Turk's Turban lilies burst upon the sight like a vision of many Grails; lonely lovelinesses that make one catch his breath, solitary flowers and herons mooning like ecstasies above lonesome pools.

But houses have their place also along this highway for life. Little cottages keeping close to the roadside and goodly patrician houses keeping decently back under their canopies of elms, but all white and all with green blinds. One great house is square and ample enough for the armies of children it used to lodge. The chimney at its heart, built of bricks baked on the premises and laid up in blue clay, would furnish material enough for a whole brick house of modern size. And the house still does modestly well in the matter of children, for the man who lives in it is the great-great-grandson of the stalwart who built it; and so he keeps up the game of life with half a dozen blue-eyed and lusty children to ride his square shoulders when he comes in from the mowing and to pull his tawny moustache, the colour of his haystacks, by the evening hearthlight. This man is built big in every way, and he is quite at home in his big house. Another plainer house is the oldest lodger of all on my road. It has held its gable above the lilac bushes for over two hundred years. It is hale and hearty in spite of its aged clapboards that are the colour of old board fences, in spite of the indignity of a rubberoid roof that a utilitarian age has thrust upon it. It, too, is tenanted still. This is the beauty that most of the houses along this road have, the beauty of life stirring under the beams. Of course, my road would have its hermit; no well-or-

dered New England road would be without him. Some twisted characters there must be to leaven the generality of healthy men. My hermit built his own place, and the stovepipe that comes through one of the two windows is not without a touch of the artistic. The architect lives on the blueberries around him, with some additions from his bed-quilt garden in the way of potatoes and turnips, and the loneliness that he loves. The whippoorwill sings unterrified even upon this man's ridgepole, the man lives that still. This hermit has seen himself become a legend while he still lives and has heard doggerel verses sung in his honour.

No such a road could do without a country schoolhouse. Mine has two. One is a cenotaph to more spacious days when children were more plentiful. But the other is full up and in full cry, after the golden-rod has dimmed its fires. I am sorry that I cannot say that I have studied upon its benches and heard its pines singing around it. But I did visit it once as a boy on a day of glory when my own proper brick schoolhouse knocked this one six ways of a Sunday in a spelling match. There is that balm.

The sole industry abutting on the road, beyond the ancient one of Tubal and his long line of sons, the years have ruined. The sawmill that accounted for many of the virgin pines of the countryside and turned out the white substance of the white houses hereabouts is silent now.

Its business has been swallowed up by the city. But I remember the day when its droning song was patterned in my head with the pattern of pioneers building the history of our country in my history book. Nature has done her best with the rotting beams of the mill and the dry sluices, and the ruins are lichened like the ruins of old trees. The wild raspberry comes through the floor in place of the living silver of the mysterious saw that used always to make me think of Excalibur and the arm in the lake. So the road has its ruin.

And that nothing at all be lacking to complete the vista, there is the white spire of the church to see above meadows full of black-eyed Susans and wild caraway parasols. The church, too, is something of a ruin now, though there are Summer services still. For most of the tall men who liked to worship in the sunlight that came in clear through its homely plain panes are harvested home to the earth in the graveyard nearby. But the piety of the neighbourhood still sees to it that it has its new paint on spire and blinds when paint is sorely needed. It is good to have a bright landmark to steer the plough by in the furrow. And the church is still in the minds of the new generation, and all is well.

It is easy to see why I have chosen this road as mine. What more could a man ask than one finds here? Running water and old houses, men and women who have

the colour of happiness in their eyes, the sea, children, woods and fields to feed one, a corner-grocery store, straight pines to lift the eyes to, ruins, gardens and graves, cows and swallows, the spire of a church, and an aged labourer to stand up against the evening star like a symbol and a benediction. What more bliss or beauty is there to be had? The Turl in Oxford cannot hold a candle to such a thoroughfare for giving us all the things we need to keep us hale. For the wares one can buy along this Maine road are not for barter in the streets of towns. They are the stuffs the Maker has woven on His own looms, and whosoever would have them must learn to live a life that will fit into the pattern of the sunrise and the sunset, the winds, and the daisies of the field.

THE END

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